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**An Exploration of Inclusive Practices in Schools: Case Studies of Two
Primary Schools**

by

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Canterbury Christ Church University

**Thesis submitted to the University of Kent
for the Degree of Doctorate of Education**

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Abstract

This thesis uses the accounts of teachers and senior leaders from two case study schools to explore issues impacting upon the development of inclusive practices within schools. The notion of inclusion is a complex and problematic one, and this study illuminates that complexity through the accounts and experiences of two 'ordinary' schools mediating the challenges of developing inclusive practices within the current educational system.

The study purposefully focuses upon the perspectives of the teachers and senior leaders. Other voices, including those of the pupils, parents and support staff within the school, have not been included, in order to retain the focus upon gaining greater depth of understanding of the complex issue of inclusion through the eyes and voices of the professionals (teachers and senior leaders) engaging in the decision making and day to day planning for meeting the needs of all pupils.

The study uses an ethnographic case study approach to gather data through semi-structured interviews, observation (including classroom visits), learning conversations and strategic focus group discussions. A three phase research approach has been developed to reflect ongoing engagement with the complex issue of researching perspectives towards developing inclusive practices within schools. A non-judgemental and non-evaluative research approach has been utilized, which moves away from the researchers' usual role working with schools in a collaborative or advisory capacity, and models the need to create interruptions in thinking and practice to be able to fully understand the complex factors impacting upon the development of inclusive practices within schools.

The perspectives and accounts of the teachers and senior leaders enable tensions existing within policy, literature, research and practice to be identified. The study argues that attention needs to be paid more to the emotional aspects of the experience of developing inclusive practices, and the impact that that has upon staff groups, rather than a narrow focus upon specific actions and outcomes. The centrality of values and principles which are shared and continually discussed and re-negotiated to produce an embedded inclusive school culture is acknowledged, as well as the impact of positive, supportive and inclusive staff relationships within this process.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study considers the problematic and complex issue of developing inclusive practices within schools. It moves away from a narrow focus upon inclusion relating to the placement and provision of pupils with SEN, towards a broader conceptualization of inclusion referring to the provision of an education system in which all pupils can participate, access, make progress and enjoy learning. A number of central principles underpin this study:

- Inclusion is seen as an unending process conceptualized as a complex process, not a simple issue of specific actions and processes.
- The study supports the notion of inclusion as Education for All (UNESCO, 1994; Ainscow et al, 2006) and emphasizes the need for practitioners within schools to focus upon being aware of and removing barriers to learning, participation and access (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) for all pupils.
- The term inclusive practices, rather than inclusion is used to demonstrate an awareness of the range of factors impacting upon the process of enacting inclusive values and principles within the school setting, and also an understanding of the fact that a school can never fully ‘achieve’ inclusion.
- Inclusive practices within this study are seen to encompass a broad focus on the notion of removing barriers to learning and participation for all pupils rather than on a narrow focus on including pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN).
- The study looks past narrow focuses on specific practices and strategies to an acknowledgement of the wider importance of central features including the underlying culture, staff relationships within the school and the impact of both internal and external contextual factors upon the inclusive practices that a school develops.
- The study acknowledges the notion that inclusion is a firmly values driven process: it is about beliefs, principles, inclusive cultures and inclusive relationships within the school setting: it is not a mechanical process of implementing particular strategies or approaches.

The research area links closely with the development of my own career. At different times my own conceptualization of the notion of inclusion has changed, and has reflected both an SEN perspective and the wider, values driven perspective of inclusion being a “principled approach to education and society” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 15) which this study emphasises. I have worked as a teacher and as a Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) within a number of primary schools, often in areas of high socio-economic deprivation. I have also worked within a special school with pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Currently, in addition to working in a school, I work in an advisory capacity as a Local Authority Advisory teacher supporting schools to

develop their inclusive practices and systems. I also work with schools as a consultant or as a critical friend, and have a role as an MA tutor and course director on courses around Enabling Learning, Inclusion and School Development.

The area of inclusion is therefore central to my work. Throughout my career I have experienced tensions and conflicts in relation to how inclusion is conceptualised, as a result of influences upon me from colleagues, pupils within different settings, and now, through the experiences of, and my aspirations for, my own children as they embark on primary education.

Throughout all of my experiences, however, the focus on SEN, seemed to be a small part of what the concept of inclusion should be all about. Although, in my day to day experiences of working with and supporting pupils, families and practitioners, I often see a narrow perspective on inclusion which simply encompasses the problematic challenge of including pupils with high levels of complex needs within a mainstream environment, for me, this seems a reductionist view, which fails to take into account the complex nature of inclusion and the need to look closely both at the strengths and the weaknesses of every individual child.

The current English policy context within which schools need to operate is also problematic and adds tension and complexity to the notion of developing inclusive practices (Ellis et al, 2008; Education and Skills Committee, 2006). The notion of inclusion is not clearly defined, and practitioners are presented with a conflicting number of “mixed messages about inclusion within government policies which have created a complex set of pushes and pulls both towards and away from the development of inclusion in education and society.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 30)

In my various roles, and in different ways, I continually have to support practitioners to understand and mediate their way between these conflicting interpretations of inclusion within policy, to help them to arrive at a practice or an understanding that supports pupils and removes barriers to learning and participation for all pupils within the context of the school in which they are working.

We currently live in a multi-cultural and socio-economically diverse society. The issue of inclusion should therefore be about ensuring that all pupils, regardless of need, culture or home background have the opportunity to fully participate within a relevant, exciting and appropriate educational experience. I believe that this will look different for different pupils depending upon their particular circumstances.

As a result of my experiences, I am passionate about wanting to undertake research into the area of inclusion: to problematise the field and identify the tensions which exist through an in-depth exploration of the unique experiences of how two different schools develop inclusive practices.

Researching inclusion is a values-laden process, and I acknowledge that the particular experiences and understandings of inclusion that I have encountered throughout my career will have an impact upon why this area has been chosen, and upon the methodologies that I choose to adopt. I:

“simply cannot be value-free [and my] own value systems will influence [my] fieldwork to a greater or lesser degree.” (McLean, 2006: 316)

This study seeks to draw out the complexities and tensions apparent in accounts from practitioners engaging in developing inclusive practices. The research was conducted over a period of two years: September 2007 until September 2009, with a flexible ethnographic case study methodological approach being developed to consider the following research questions:

1. What are the understandings of inclusion from the perspectives of the practitioner, the government and current literature, and how do they complement and contradict each other?
2. What are the individual elements that schools identify as significant to the development of their inclusive practices?
3. How do contextual factors impact upon the development and prioritization of inclusive practices?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Inclusion is a highly contested and complex concept (Peters, 2003).

This Literature Review contextualizes the issue by providing a review of some of the broad features underpinning research findings about the development of inclusive practices within schools, including:

- The complexity of the term ‘inclusion’
- The impact of current policy contexts upon the development of inclusive practices
- Leadership that promotes the development of inclusive practices
- Inclusive school cultures
- Inclusive pedagogies
- Staff relations and the affective nature of inclusive school development.

The research within this study, whilst not attempting to evaluate or substantiate these broad areas in any systematic way, uses the knowledge gained through the critical consideration of the features to later contextualize discussions around exactly what emerged from the individual school settings.

The complexity of the term inclusion

Inclusion is seen, by many, to represent a ‘profoundly important policy shift in education’ (Jull, 2009: 492) yet despite this, there is little agreement on the precise basis for discussions about inclusion, with an acknowledgement that it encompasses many different and competing perspectives, and that it remains one of the most controversial issues within educational discussions today (Mitchell, 2005; Slee, 2007). As Corbett (2001) notes:

“The term ‘inclusive education’ has become so used and abused that it has little meaning.” (Corbett, 2001: 10)

A range of very different and at times opposing perspectives and approaches have emerged within discussions about inclusion, with little consensus about the principles and values underpinning the term. These include a focus on inclusion as:

- the ‘placement’ of pupils- mainly with SEN and disabilities (Warnock, 2005; Barron & Amerena, 2007)
- the Education for All Movement (Booth, 2003; UNESCO, 1994, 2001)
- “addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners” (UNESCO, 2004)
- a dynamic process which constantly evolves (Booth, 2003; Booth & Ainscow, 2002)
- the restructuring of schools to respond to diversity (Sebba & Sachdev, 1997; Hopkins, 2007)

- active participation, involving choice and involvement in the process- not something that can be ‘done’ to a marginalised individual or group (Florian, 1998)

As Barton (1997) notes:

“A serious engagement with the issue of inclusive education soon reveals that ‘there are conceptual difficulties and slippage involved in defining what [inclusion] is.’” (Barton, 1997: 232)

As a result, the concept of inclusion is increasingly becoming associated with confusion, lack of clarity and shared meaning, being seen as a “fragile and unstable concept” (O’Brien, T, 2002: 181) resulting in “varying interpretations and manifestations in educational practice.” (Moran, A, 2009: 46)

A conflicting situation has arisen, between an increased use of what is presumed to be an understood and accepted term within everyday educational discourse, and lack of clarity of the term, leading to it being used in differing and opposing ways (Lunt & Norwich, 1999; Campbell 2002). The increased use of the term ‘inclusion’ within policy and research therefore masks the complexity of the issue and the fact that the actual practice and implementation of inclusion within schools remains largely problematic (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2007):

“Familiarity with the terminology of inclusive education has grown considerably. Somewhat problematically though, there exist competing discourses through which meanings and understandings differ.” (Graham & Slee, 2008: 81)

Rather than becoming a guiding principle in the development of educational and societal systems throughout the world, inclusion has therefore come to be seen as simply the ‘buzz word’ of the decade (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004; Raynor, 2007). As Howes et al (2009) acknowledge:

“Inclusion, like ‘reflection’ (Morrison 1996, p317), has become a portmanteau term, used for such a variety of purposes that it has passed beyond ambiguity and is becoming a source of confusion.” (Howes et al, 2009: 6)

In some areas, the term has become “cosy” and “romanticized” (Howes et al, 2009) with a failure to explicitly relate the experience of the ‘included’ person with the wider contexts of economic and social factors. Principles associated with inclusive values, such as ‘equity’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘inclusion’ are difficult to argue against, and so they have been used without question or consideration to form the background discourse against which a range of conflicting approaches to inclusion and education are contextualized.

Whilst so many different perspectives are perpetuated relating to the meaning of inclusion, inclusion becomes simply a “convenient and ambiguous language” (Dyson, 2005: 84), with

discussions about the position of inclusion within education amounting to little more than “the trading of abstract ideological positions, which has little connection with the reality of school practice and provision” (Skidmore, 2004: xiv).

Even the Salamanca Statement, which can be seen to be the cornerstone of international discussion of inclusion as a relevant priority moving countries towards a consideration of a broader notion of Education for All, is criticized for the vague language and lack of concrete points for action that it espouses. Miles (2007) therefore cites Katerina Tomasevski, the UN Rapporteur on the Right to Education as noting that:

“ ‘the Salamanca Statement has more or less collapsed because it was strong on nouns like empowerment, inclusion and quality education but extremely weak on who has the *obligation to do what.* ’ (Tomasevski, 2004: 5).” (Miles, 2007: 73)

Tensions abound within the discourse of inclusion which continues to make it a problematic principle. It is seen as “impractical” and “*ideological*” (Thomas & Loxley, 2007: 134) rather than being usefully rooted in the reality of educational practice. It is also seen to contain an inherent contradiction between conflicting values concerning the rights of the individual against the rights of the majority (Lunt, 2002).

As a result of the continuing problematic position of inclusion within discourse today, rather than being considered a relevant and appropriate societal and educational goal, it is considered by some, to simply have become a “*monument to political correctness.... and a messy confusion of contradictory or idealistic thinking and discourse.*” (Raynor, 2007: 36)

This is significant, and has led to a culture in which policy makers, practitioners and researchers freely talk about ‘inclusion’ and ‘inclusive practices’ without providing a meaningful definition of what is being discussed. It has become too easy to simply use the term ‘inclusion’ which is seen to be an inherent and moral ‘right’ within today’s society, without clearly defining the principles and practices behind what is being discussed (O’Hanlon & Thomas 2004).

Such confusion has led to arguments against the ‘rightness’ of inclusion as a key educational goal. Warnock (2005) therefore describes the concept of inclusion as “possibly the most disastrous legacy of the 1978 Report” (ibid: 20), and calls for the removal of inclusion from its current position at the top of educational values and priorities.

Inclusion is not a ‘single movement’ (Clough & Corbett, 2000), and the accepted use of the term within policy, practice and literature without clear understandings and definitions of the meaning ascribed to it within specific contexts needs to be continually challenged.

Inclusion and SEN

One of the major barriers to developing a clear understanding of the term inclusion is the continued positioning of inclusion within discussions about special needs education and the placement of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities within mainstream schools (Warnock, 2005; Barron & Amerena, 2007). Whilst inclusion remains historically linked with concepts of placement and integration a broader vision of inclusion relating to the equity of access, participation and opportunity for ALL is difficult to develop.

Links between inclusion and the education and placement of pupils with SEN and disabilities perpetuates a negative view that inclusion cannot work, and limits the possibilities for future development and thinking about fully inclusive values, principles and practices. Warnock's (2005) statement linking inclusion to the placement of pupils with high levels of SEN is therefore a not uncommon sentiment amongst educationalists and practitioners:

“There is increasing evidence that the ideal of inclusion, if this means that all but those with the most severe disabilities will be in mainstream schools, is not working.” (Warnock, 2005: 32)

As a result, inclusion is criticized as simply being related to the field of ‘special education’, unable to move discussions and assumptions about equity of participation, access and opportunity forward. Teachers are seen to continue to focus upon the difficulties in including an individual with high level needs, rather than exploring wider issues around class or school level barriers to learning. This is said to constitute:

“a dangerous narrowing of inclusion and a repetition of the debate on integration. Inclusion seems to be understood as merely a reform of special education with the same basic assumptions.” (Stromstad, 2003: 34)

There is therefore growing recognition of the need to distance the term ‘inclusion’ from discussions about ‘special education’ and ‘integration’ (Petrou et al, 2009), with questions raised concerning the:

“usefulness of an approach to inclusion that, in attempting to increase the participation of students, focuses on a ‘disabled’ or ‘special needs’ part of them and ignores all the other ways in which participation for any student may be impeded or enhanced.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 16)

Distinctions between the two approaches of ‘special education’ and ‘inclusion’ are also advocated on philosophical and pedagogical bases, with Petrou et al (2009), arguing that developments in inclusive education and practices have been hampered and ‘influenced’ by historic links with traditional ‘special education’ practices, and that, in fact:

“the educational policies that were developed in those endeavours lead to divisive practices rather than to inclusive practices.” (Petrou, et al, 2009: 446)

It is therefore seen that a focus on ‘special educational needs’ and disability is in opposition to views of inclusion based upon the social and human rights of all (Dyson, 2001).

Education For All

For others, inclusion is seen to encompass a much wider rights based, social justice approach to meeting the needs of ALL within society (Barton, 1997; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Lunt & Norwich, 1999). Inclusive education is seen to be about “responding to diversity” (Barton, 1997: 233) rather than a narrower focus upon individuals or marginalized groups. It is about equity of the educational experience, access, participation, achievement and enjoyment of ALL pupils, rather than a marginalized few. Within this definition, there is an understanding of the complex nature of “barriers to learning and participation” (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Barriers will look different to different individuals. There is therefore an understanding that what may constitute a barrier for one individual, may actually be a support or a resource for another: all individuals learn and respond in different ways, and within this understanding, inclusion should be about identifying and valuing the particular needs and skills of each individual. It is therefore seen to be:

“about providing a framework within which all children – regardless of ability, gender, language, ethnic or cultural origin – can be valued equally, treated with respect and provided with real opportunities at school.” (Thomas & Loxley, 2001:119)

There is a noticeable emphasis upon the word ‘diversity’ apparent within much of the literature (Kugelmass, 2004; Higgins et al, 2009; Booth, 2003), with the notion that: “inclusion is about diversity living and working together.” (Stromstad, 2003: 34). This is seen to be essential as societies change and evolve to respond to increasingly diverse multi-cultural communities (DiGiorgio, 2009).

The move towards considering the complex nature of ‘barriers to learning and participation’ also links with a consideration of the complex and dynamic relationship between the two concepts of inclusion and exclusion (Booth, 2003).

Thus:

“We could say that inclusive education is actually a movement against all kinds of exclusion, including social exclusion, and a reaction against the practice of political segregation and social inequality.” (Petrou, et al, 2009: 446)

Within this understanding of inclusion, attention shifts from a narrow focus upon the placement and participation of minority groups or individuals, to a re-conceptualisation of inclusion as concerned with transforming and restructuring social practices and systems to eradicate all forms of discrimination and inequality.

This is a major shift of focus, which can be seen to link with wider ideas for system wide reform to ensure that schools alone do not have to tackle the complex issues of inclusive practices inherent within society as a whole (Imison, 2004; Hopkins, 2007; Wrigley, 2003). The notion of moving away from a process of “assimilation and accommodation” (Barton, 1997) towards a system of widespread reform through which the school is fundamentally changed is emphasized.

Inclusive education is not a simple and agreed concept. It continues to provoke debate at many conceptual levels and is seen by many to “ultimately [be] an inherently troubled and troubling educational and social project.” (Slee, 2007: 160)

Understanding of this ‘troubled project’, and the way in which these different perspectives on inclusion are interpreted within English schools can only be achieved through an exploration of the impact of the English policy context upon inclusion.

The impact of current policy contexts upon the development of inclusive practices

The way that inclusion is defined and interpreted through government policy impacts directly upon the development of inclusive policy and practice within schools. The English policy context has undergone significant and wide ranging change over the last two decades (since the 1988 Education Reform Act), which has impacted both directly and indirectly upon the development of inclusive practices within schools. Schools are therefore described as having “been in a state of almost continuous change” (Alexander, 2010: 2)

Looking back, the form that this change has taken has also been significant, and has moved educational discussions and practices away from collaborative, reflective discussions around values and the fundamental purposes of meaningful education systems into a narrower focus upon imposed implementation of national strategies and teaching curricula, and an emphasis upon standards, league tables and testing (Alexander, 2010; Rouse & Florian, 1997). Developing effective, locally appropriate inclusive practices within such a “hostile legislative context” (Rouse & Florian, 1997: 324) is therefore considered difficult to achieve and sustain.

National education policy, since the 1990’s has attempted to “embrace both a broad concept of inclusion and a specific type of marketplace reform.” (Black-Hawkins et al, 2007: 10), and this has caused further confusion in relation to the positioning of inclusive values and practices within the education system. Education has been seen in increasingly business terms, which perpetuate existing inequalities within “highly stratified societies” (Slee, 2007: 162), resulting in

pupils being increasingly marginalized within an education system which encourages a uniform curriculum which cannot fully meet the needs of a culturally diverse society (Slee, 2007) and which emphasizes performativity, making schools “more risk averse, more selective, more exclusive” (Slee, 2007: 163), leading to increased forms of “exclusion and segregated provision” (Barton, 1997: 235). The policies produce tensions and conflicts between inclusive ideals and enforced practices, and weaken relationships between schools and the communities that they served (Booth et al, 1997).

Rouse & Florian (1997) therefore identify a range of tensions which exist between the market-place reforms and the principles which underpin inclusive school development:



Figure 1: Tensions between market-place reforms and principles which underpin inclusive School development (Rouse & Florian, 1997: 332)

The situation in the 1990’s policy context therefore looked bleak, with Barton (1997) commenting that “everything seems to be against an inclusive outcome” (Barton, 1997: 239). But yet, with the introduction of the New Labour government, whilst the market-force reforms continued, inclusion, through an emphasis both upon notions of social inclusion and educational inclusion came to be seen as the “cornerstone of its policies” (DfEE, 1998: 8), with “unprecedented interest from the government” (Booth, 2003: 5)

Even with this focus however, recognizing “the influence of government policies on inclusion *in schools*...is problematic” (Black-Hawkins et al, 2007: 19) due to the sheer number of government policies which discuss the notion of inclusion, as well as the number of ambiguous and contradictory perspectives towards inclusion espoused within them. Indeed, the wide ranging perspectives and understandings of what is meant by the term inclusion within society today can be seen to both be evidenced within and also “emanate from” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 178) recent and current English governmental policy which simply serve to continue this

situation of confusion (Education and Skills Committee, 2006; Ainscow & Tweddle, 2003). The impact of this upon the potential development of educational systems to improve inclusive practices is significant, with practitioners having to oscillate between differing perspectives depending upon the policy document being referred to. Thus, there is some guidance which focuses upon linking the meaning of inclusion with a narrow view of placement and provisions for pupils with SEN and Disability: for example The Green Paper (DfEE, 1997) and Removing Barriers to Achievement (DfES, 2004). This is in contrast to other guidance which promotes a general notion of inclusive education and principles to support all pupils to participate, achieve and progress: for example the National Curriculum Inclusion Statement (1999) and OFSTED Guidance (2000), which states that:

“An educationally inclusive school is one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well-being of every young person matter. Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools. This shows, not only in their performance, but also in their ethos and their willingness to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties.” (OFSTED; 2000: 4)

Black-Hawkins et al (2007) therefore note that government policy documents espouse two very different and competing perspectives on inclusion. At times, issues around inclusion are reduced to discussions based upon an outdated medical model, which places the problem as residing within the individual themselves. At other times, the term inclusion is used more widely to encompass general principles of an equitable and inclusive educational system for all.

The Government’s changing definition of inclusion is seen to “cause confusion” (Education and Skills Committee, 2006: 23) and “undermine efforts to develop inclusion” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 178). “Notional commitments” to inclusion within government policy are made within a “larger political and policy context that many would interpret as antithetical to inclusion.” (Thomas & Loxley, 2007: 94)

Indeed, the existing educational system, with inbuilt segregationary practices in the forms of ability setting, selection, faith and single sex schools and special schools, impacts significantly upon the potential for the development of fully inclusive practices to support the inclusion of all (O’Brien, 2002; Booth, 2003), with the:

“irony of such discriminatory practices (selective schools etc) existing in deeply embedded social and professional cultures, and continually reflected in professional attitudes or educational systems, is profound! [There is] a deepening paradox at work in managing inclusive provision that by definition generates a conflicting set of dilemmas, contradictions and tensions in the school community.” (Raynor, 2007: 159)

Teachers working hard to develop inclusive practices are left with little “systematic support or leadership” (Higgins et al, 2009: 484) from centralised government policy, and the values of educational practitioners who espouse inclusive principles are not seen to fit with an education

system in which “*the fundamental purpose is to make young people ‘fit’ for the economy at the expense of aims of individual wellbeing or social citizenship*” (Daniels et al, 2009: 2).

Inclusion within the English context continues therefore to be seen to “*emerge as a complex and highly problematic phenomenon characterized by considerable ambiguity.*” (Dyson, 2005: 66)

Inclusion as a localized process

Notions of inclusion as a process, and the need for localized interpretations of that process are central to the thinking which underpins this thesis. The study emphasizes that inclusion is an “active and not a passive process” (Corbett, 2001: 11). It is both an active process and an ongoing one: with the concept of a fully ‘inclusive school’ being seen as an “elusive ideal” (Booth et al, 1997: 338). Inclusion is instead understood to be:

“an ongoing process: marked out by struggle and negotiation, and worked out through interpersonal actions and relations in a wider social and political context.” (Benjamin et al, 2003: 556)

This is, however, not always the perspective promoted or endorsed through policy and practice, where often inclusion is reduced into a series of simplistic actions or processes to be ticked off an inclusion checklist. As Artiles & Dyson (2005) note:

“It is common for educationalists to talk about the development of inclusive education as if it were a race towards a single, clearly defined and consensually understood finishing post... Such uni-dimensional perspectives are simplistic.” (Artiles & Dyson, 2005: 57)

Whilst it is important to recognise inclusion as a “process rather than a destination” (Mittler, 2000: 12), there are also difficulties inherent in this approach. Thus, Lunt & Norwich (1999) identify the tension which exists between referring to inclusion as an unending process, and keeping it realistic and valid as an educational goal. They therefore argue that

“not specifying steps towards the inclusive goal makes it hard to apply the term and identify progress towards inclusion.” (Lunt & Norwich, 1999: 32)

Yet, schools and communities should be encouraged and supported to actively engage in a day to day review of their practices in an effort to overcome any exclusive or segregationary elements and improve equity of opportunity, participation and access for all, through relevant, localised responses rather than through nationally dictated procedures. Inclusion will look different in different schools, in different communities, at different times dependent upon a range of contextual factors impacting upon that school or locality at that time. Inclusive priorities (policies and practices) will also be different, depending upon the developmental point of the school or community at that time (cultural factors) (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

How, and in which direction, a school or community will develop inclusive practices will not always be able to be pre-determined. It will depend upon a complex and dynamic relationship between a number of competing and conflicting variables, including socio-economic factors, cultural diversity, political agendas, relationships, staff and pupil mobility. The notion of ‘emergence’ in relation to discussions about inclusion is therefore useful, to emphasise that:

“the development of inclusion cannot be organised according to a schedule, but that it involves connections and opportunities that are not available or understood in advance.” (Howes et al, 2009: 107)

This is an important point both for policy makers and practitioners to be aware of. It is not possible to aspire to an ‘ideal’ or fixed concept, regardless of context:

“Inclusion might be regarded as an absolute concept for some policy makers but for individuals it is a relative concept linked to the social context of time and place.” (Tod, 2002: 24)

There is therefore a need to move away from ‘one-size-fits-all’ models “on the basis that such approaches do not include everyone” (Higgins et al, 2009: 481), and that they pay little attention to the contextual factors impacting upon possible development (Booth, 2003; Kugelmass, 2004, Howes et al, 2009). As Dyson (2004) notes:

“It seems to me mistaken to look for a single set of policies or practices which will *somehow ‘deliver’ inclusive education. Such policies and practices have to be developed in different contexts to address whatever threats to equity arise in different systems, at different times and for different groups of children.*” (Dyson, 2004: 615)

Schools, like the people working within them, are not empty vessels: they are at their own unique stage of development, and thus their inclusive practices must evolve from that particular starting point (Campbell et al, 2002). Booth (2003) acknowledges this need, arguing that this fits with a transformational rather than an assimilationist view of education practices and inclusion. This viewpoint:

“starts from a recognition of diversity amongst students and sees it as a rich resource for learning. There is no single standard of achievement. Schools adapt to the identities, experience, knowledge and skills of their students and are constantly transformed by them.” (Booth, 2003: 3)

It is this dynamic and unstructured approach to the development of inclusive practices within schools which is at the same time both so exciting and yet potentially so challenging both to policy makers and to practitioners. New and radically different approaches to school improvement and development, which are based upon new notions of individual school development, emergence and transformation, rather than the current model of prescribed, ‘one-size-fits-all’ models, need to be encouraged (Hopkins, 2007; Booth, 2003). Such models will be underpinned by particular approaches to leadership within the school context.

Leadership that promotes the development of inclusive practices:

Much has been written about the importance and centrality of leadership models within school development, and it is not possible to present it all here. However, for the purposes of this study, it is important to emphasise the links between innovative approaches to whole school development which see the development of inclusive values and practices as an ongoing central process within the school context, the development of inclusive school cultures and the fostering and discussion of inclusive pedagogy to underpin teaching and learning within the school setting, and the centrality of the leadership approach within these processes.

Research undertaken to consider the nature of inclusive school cultures has highlighted the need for leadership approaches which “challenge existing beliefs and assumptions within a school” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 152).

This is significant. The development of inclusive practices requires interruptions rather than a perpetuation of the “status quo” (Corbett, 2001: 45), and this often needs to be provided by the leader within the school setting. It is difficult for other staff members to effectively challenge this status quo, when the leader is determined simply to assimilate learners within an existing culture. Riehl (2000) therefore defines some of the nature of that ‘challenge’ which she considers should be a central part of the principal, or leaders, role in creating inclusive schools for diverse pupils. This includes the need to foster new meanings about diversity, promote inclusive practices within schools and build links between schools and communities.

Notions of distributed leadership are also central within research and literature about leadership in relation to inclusive school cultures. Leadership is therefore not solely concerned with the practices of an individual, but is understood to be achieved through leadership practices across the whole school context. Such an approach to distributed leadership is said to set out to “empower others to bring about change” (Ainscow, 2007: 152), again contributing to this notion of the need to challenge the existing status quo through an active and ongoing process of change and development (Corbett, 2001).

Shepherd & Haszari (2007) use the term “participatory leadership” (ibid: 477) and emphasise the way that this form of leadership sets the “context for democratic decision making” (ibid: 477) which will reflect central inclusive principles and values. Within such approaches to leadership, systems within the school are fundamentally changed and restructured to enable reflective and collaborative problem solving approaches to emerge, with inclusive values and practices reflected throughout school structures and processes, and modeled to the pupils through the relationships and interactions of staff members towards each other and towards the pupils.

Particular approaches to leadership models are therefore seen to be central in enabling the creation of inclusive school cultures, as the leaders, with their colleagues through models of democratic distributed or participatory leadership, shape the school culture to reflect and explicitly model shared values and principles.

Inclusive School Cultures:

Much has been written in the literature to support the notion of the centrality of embedded school cultures in enabling the development of shared inclusive values and practices (Kugelmass, 2004; Booth & Ainscow, 2002; Corbett, 2001). Indeed the over-riding importance of a school culture built around inclusive values and principles emerged as one of the key findings within the systematic review completed by Dyson et al (2002) into inclusion and promoting participation for all students.

This is an important element, and one which builds upon the previous discussions relating to the importance of moving beyond narrow prescribed blueprints of practice. The notion of embedded inclusive school cultures acknowledges the importance of different journeys towards the development of inclusive practices which will be dependent upon a range of internal and external factors impacting on a daily basis upon the culture of the school.

A focus on the importance of culture is however, not a new phenomenon. Geertz (1973) therefore emphasised this notion in his work, and offers a definition of culture as the context within which a range of interactions, behaviour and practices can be understood and described. Within this interpretation, culture is therefore central to providing meaning about any educational activity, to contextualise it within the unique characteristics of the particular setting.

The development of inclusive practices is seen to be “more than a technical issue, [but instead is] embedded and justified in the understandings and discourse of a group, and is meaningful to that group” (Howes et al, 2009: 29). Developing inclusive practices is therefore completely “dependent on the development of inclusive cultures” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 161).

School culture is difficult to define, observe or measure. Eagleton (2000), cited in Stephens (2007) notes therefore that “*the word ‘culture’ is both too broad and too narrow to be greatly useful*” (Eagleton, 2000: 32)” (Stephens, 2007: 25). Seashore (2010) emphasizes that it is a ‘soft indicator’, difficult to define, but not soft in effect. School culture, or ethos, is therefore “recognized as exerting a profound influence on many aspects of school life, including relationships between teachers, pupils and parents, *and pupils’ attitudes and behaviour*” (Alexander, 2010: 356).

It is deeply embedded within schools and can loosely be defined as “*the way we do it here... a set of norms about ways of perceiving, understanding and behaving.*” (Nias, 1992: 5), having significant implications for the development of inclusive practices within the school setting.

Cultures are “fundamentally about meaning and values” (Stephens, 2007: 21), and are therefore built upon “social and moral beliefs, rather than on beliefs about curriculum and pedagogy” (Nias, 1992: 5).

Booth & Ainscow (2002) demonstrate how the values and beliefs which underpin the culture provide the foundation for inclusive policies and practices to evolve:

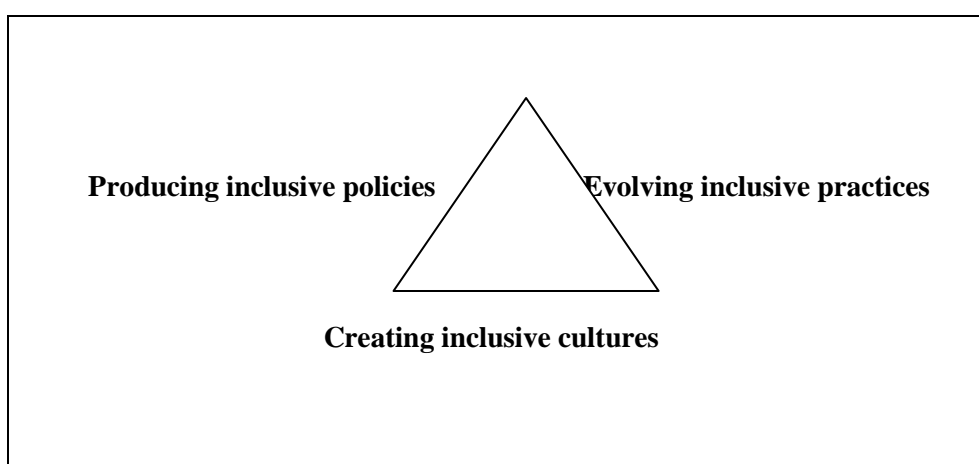


Fig. 2 The Index for Inclusion Dimensions

This model reinforces the significance of inclusive cultures within any discussions about inclusive policies and practices. Within this model the concept of “creating inclusive cultures” (Booth & Ainscow, 2002: 8) is purposefully placed along the base of the triangle. Booth & Ainscow (2002) argue that too little attention is placed upon the centrality of inclusive school cultures upon the potential development of inclusive practices. They see that an inclusive school culture is:

“at the heart of school improvement. The development of shared inclusive values and collaborative relationships may lead to changes in the other dimensions. It is through inclusive school cultures that changes in policies and practices can be sustained by new staff and students.” (Booth & Ainscow, 2002: 8)

A consideration of culture is therefore central to any discussion about the development of policies and practices, which are seen to be the outward signs of the inherent norms and values within organizations and school settings (Wrigley, 2006). Thus, Dyson et al (2002) note that the development of inclusive approaches is neither mechanical nor linear; rather it is dependent

upon sustaining an inclusive culture which reflects the individual values and beliefs of the staff members within the school setting.

Kugelmass (2004) identifies a number of broad principles which are central features of an inclusive school culture. These include practices which are designed around the child, rather than focused upon “strict adherence to external standards, theories or ideologies” (ibid: 12) and a focus on “compassionate caring” (ibid: 13). Inclusive school cultures can also be seen to be characterized by “values of respect for difference” (Dyson et al, 2002: 56) and diversity. Ainscow et al (2006) also identify the importance of relationships within inclusive school cultures, and this is seen to encompass not only adult to child relationships but also adult to adult relationships.

The notion of culture, however, is not a simple one, allowing the identification of an over-riding central principle. Seashore (2010) emphasizes the fact that it is not possible to revert to simplistic generalizations about school culture which can be easily transferred and applied to other settings. School cultures are complex, although she does highlight the need to move away from policy contexts which emphasise cultures of ‘doing’ into school cultures which emphasise ‘reflection and insight’. Culture should therefore be seen as a complex web of inter-connecting principles, values and actions which, taken together, forms the underlying culture of the school or organization. These principles, however, should not be seen to exist in a vacuum or have any fixed nature, as they will be partly dependent upon the feelings, values, emotions and interactions of the staff within the school.

As a result of the complex interaction of a number of different staff members individual interpretations of values, it must be noted that school culture is not always “consensual or universal” (Dyson et al, 2002: 47). Whilst inclusive school cultures strive to be built upon shared values and beliefs, they are also dependent upon cultures of collaboration, which enable tensions and contradictions between perspectives to be discussed and negotiated (Dyson et al, 2002; Kugelmass, 2004).

Culture develops over time and as a result of the complex social interactions and relationships between staff members within the school setting. ‘Inclusive cultures’ therefore cannot be transferred, transported or prescribed. To understand culture is to understand the complexity, contradictions and tensions involved in individually held deep rooted values and principles, and ways that staff members are supported to come together with their different emotional experiences to build shared values and principles upon which the school culture is founded.

A commitment to professional dialogue and discourse is seen to be key to enabling the development of inclusive school cultures. Thus, inclusive school cultures cannot be built and

sustained through the vision and values of one person alone. Rather, what is required is “a collective commitment to a shared vision by individually empowered individuals” (Kugelmass, 2004: 125).

Ainscow et al (2006) use the notion of “communities of practice” (ibid: 154) to describe the process whereby groups of practitioners develop their inclusive school cultures and practices by:

“Continuously negotiating and renegotiating practice on the basis of meanings, beliefs and values which are broadly shared but within which conflicts and disagreements can occur.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 154)

Staff relationships and interactions are therefore central to the notion of developing inclusive school cultures and thus inclusive practices within the school setting (Nias et al, 1989; Kugelmass, 2004). School cultures will not be able to be sustained without strong supporting relationships between staff and a leader who shares and models inclusive values and commitments. The social processes underpinning the embedded school culture are therefore a key indicator of the underlying principles and values within the setting.

The notion of the flexibility of culture also needs to be understood. Inclusive school cultures are not “static phenomena” (Tudge et al, 2009: 122). Instead, a range of variables, including the social and affective nature of staff relationships, interactions and values continually impacts upon the ongoing development of the school culture. Nias et al (1989) therefore notes the inappropriate way that cultures have been conceived within some literature and government policy as being something that is “fixed and reified” (ibid: 11). Instead, she emphasizes that in the human co-construction of culture:

“individuals construct the cultures of which they become part and in becoming members of them they acquire the capacity to alter them.” (Nias et al, 1989: 10)

This ability to become part of the culture, and thereby the underpinning values and principles within the school setting, and then to acquire the capacity to alter those values and practices will ultimately impact upon the continual development and emergence of inclusive pedagogies to meet the needs of all pupils within the school setting.

Inclusive Pedagogy:

The values embedded within the school culture and the leadership approaches will therefore directly impact upon the evolving pedagogical practices and decisions within the school context. Alexander (2001) emphasises how both school culture and pedagogy are inextricably linked:

“the central educational activity which we call pedagogy- the purposive mix of educational values and principles in action, of planning, content, strategy and

technique, of learning and assessment, and of relationships both instrumental and affective- *is a window on the culture of which it is a part, and on that culture's* underlying tensions and contradictions as well as its publically declared educational policies and purposes” (Alexander, 2001: 4)

This notion of tensions and contradictions is significant, and reflects the ongoing emphasis throughout all the discussions about how cultures and practices cannot be static, and will often not be able to be universally agreed by all. Instead, they will be dependent upon ongoing discussion and reflection to accommodate changes in relationships within the school setting.

Alexander (2009) defines pedagogy as “ideas which enable teaching in the classroom, formalize it as a policy and locate it in a culture” (Alexander, 2009: 10): the links between culture and pedagogy are therefore explicit and inter-linked.

Exploring inclusive school pedagogies is not about providing a simplistic checklist of teaching approaches and strategies to be used and delivered within the school context. Rather it should be seen as concerned with a physical embodiment (through the democratically chosen teaching methods and approaches) of the underlying abstract values and principles embedded within the inclusive school culture. Thus, it is not possible to dictate specific approaches, but rather to consider broad features of inclusive pedagogies. These may include a focus on the “moral purpose [of education], concerned with preparing each person to live a good life.... rather than the achievement of prespecified ends” (Howes et al, 2009: 4); and an overall understanding of the importance of teacher reflection, collaboration and dialogue both between colleagues and with learners. Whilst it is sometimes easy for government policy to prescribe simple checklists, attention needs to be directed to issues around the complexity of individual school communities, to ensure that this is not forgotten, in the quest for simplistic checklists of actions or processes to be achieved by every school. Thus, whilst

“Lists have an immediate appeal in that they hold out the promise of directing schools’ attempts at self-improvement.... there is a danger that by focusing on variables which are predetermined by researchers, the salience of teachers’ own constructs are ignored.” (Riddell et al, 1998: 172)

The impact of the extraordinary amount of recent centrally imposed prescribed change has therefore led to a situation in which teachers are “used to receiving directives” (Howes et al, 2009: 5), and are less willing or able to engage in reflective discussions about fundamental decisions relating to inclusive pedagogy and practice. Yet, inclusion is not something that can be achieved through “predetermined lists of competencies to tick off” (Howes et al, 2009: 5). Rather, it needs to be something that is continually discussed and reflected upon, through dialogue between teachers and learners within the school context.

Kugelmass (2007) emphasises the “meaning making process” (ibid: 275) of learning, central to inclusive pedagogies and practices. The importance of the active participation and involvement

of all learners in their learning is therefore emphasised, and the focus is upon supporting teachers' to achieve this through the adaptation of their teaching approaches, rather than perpetuating a system in which a prescribed curriculum is delivered to pupils regardless of its relevance to their learning and development.

Inclusive pedagogies may also be seen to celebrate diversity. Rather than viewing diversity as a barrier to achievement and attainment, a key feature of inclusive pedagogy is therefore to value diversity and use it to support the development of individual learning strengths (Kugelmass, 2004; Howes et al, 2009). The focus of attention has shifted from a consideration of individual differences, towards a celebration and acceptance of diversity and difference (Petrou, 2009). Higgins et al (2009) therefore identify that this approach to inclusion and diversity:

“deconstructs difference and rejects the notion of a ‘normal’ group of children, encouraging teachers to adopt pedagogical practices that enable diverse groups of children to work together as caring, cohesive and inclusive learning communities.”
(Higgins et al, 2009: 480)

Inclusive pedagogies do not ignore the fact that there are individual differences between different learners, but instead emphasise that those differences “do not have to be construed as problems inherent within learners” (Florian & Kershner, 2009: 174). Hart et al (2007) builds upon this notion, and argue that inclusive pedagogies are ones that challenge the existing assumptions embedded within recent government policies which reinforce narrow conceptualizations of the issue of ability. Hart et al (2007) therefore instead identify three fundamental pedagogical principles fundamental to the development of inclusive practices within schools:

- **The principle of everybody:** working as an integrated community; the teachers fundamental responsibility and commitment to acting in the interests of everybody
- **The principle of co-agency:** seeing the act of transforming learning as a joint enterprise between teachers and learners
- **The principle of trust:** teachers trusting that pupils are seeking to learn, and therefore not positioning blame upon the pupils when they do not learn, instead re-evaluating their own teaching approaches.

(Adapted from Hart et al, 2007: 507)

Fig. 3: Fundamental inclusive pedagogical principles

The development of inclusive practices should not become a “contrived cultural practice” (Allan, 2003: 1). Rather, it should involve meaningful and reflective review and professional dialogue about ways to respond to diversity within the school and community in increasingly effective ways.

As Howes et al (2009) argue:

“Inclusion can never result from a quick bolt-on solution to a pressing problem. Instead, the knowledge and understanding on which inclusion is necessarily based can only be gained through ongoing dialogue involving teachers and learners in the institution that they inhabit together.” (Howes et al, 2009: 4)

“Reciprocal social relationships” (Kugelmass, 2007: 275), supporting the centrality of positive emotions and relationships are also identified as central to the development of inclusive pedagogies and practices, and this links closely with the next section on the affective nature of inclusive school development.

The affective nature of inclusive school development

Inclusion and the development of inclusive practices can be seen to be an intensely affective and emotional experience. Teaching itself is said to be a deeply personal and moral endeavour, highly charged with emotional attachment and engagement (Nias et al, 1989; Woods et al, 1997; Day, 2004)), with a “significant and ongoing part of being a teacher [being] the experiencing and management of strong emotions” (Day et al, 2006: 612). In addition, the issue of inclusion, and the challenging realities of it can cause intense emotional responses by individuals and whole staff groups which can threaten the sustainability of underlying inclusive cultures and principles (MacBeath et al, 2006). The emotive research reporting the “Costs of Inclusion” to practitioners, and the range of highly charged emotive media headlines within the newspapers provides evidence of the tension between inclusive principles and the day to day challenges and realities of developing inclusive practices within school settings.

Teaching should therefore be seen as a highly “affective practice” (James, 2009: 165), with schools being seen as places “where almost all feelings can be experienced” (ibid, 2009: 167).

The issue is complex: not only is there the emotional attachment of being a teacher, and the tension between inclusive principles and at times conflicting policies and practices, but there is also the issue of development and change. As James (2009) notes:

“Learning is inextricably associated with change, which is always associated with feelings of some kind. It is also linked with risk and uncertainty and therefore possibly anxiety and excitement, as is the process of teaching.” (James, 2009: 167)

Inclusion itself is an ongoing process, which requires continual change and development of practices to respond most effectively to the needs the community. Change and development

themselves are highly emotive and stressful concepts for humans to cope with, and can themselves provoke highly emotional responses.

Literature promotes the notion that teacher self esteem and identity is intricately tied up with individual teachers feelings of success and achievement within the teaching context, and that this is measured not through external levels or standards, but through internal evaluations of relationships, both with pupils and with other colleagues (Perryman, 2007; Beauchamp & Thomas, 2009). In particular, the notion of “making a difference” (Scott et al, 2001) to a pupil in some way is emphasized (Nias et al, 1989; Hargreaves, 1999). In this, it is important to note that teaching is:

“undertaken for a purpose and is validated by reference to educational goals and social principles as well as operational efficiency.” (Alexander, 2009: 18)

The reality of developing inclusive practice can be seen to both support and undermine the positive self image and identity that a teacher may possess, and this is an issue which is often largely ignored within current debate about inclusion within literature, policy and practice. At times the challenges of the reality of developing inclusive practices can feel unsummountable (MacBeath et al, 2006).

Indeed, defensive affective responses may be seen to be most strongly expressed when linked to the changing of behaviours developed to ‘protect’ the identity of the teacher. This can be seen in the challenging change in thinking required when developing inclusive principles and practices which break down the notion of the problem or ‘difficulty’ being inherent with the child, to a response which requires the teacher to internally examine the barriers to learning which are unintentionally caused by her own approaches to teaching and curriculum delivery.

Against this background, the issue of inclusion and developing or changing practices to become more inclusive is incredibly complex. Coping with the day to day reality and challenges of supporting pupils with high levels of complex needs can impact upon inbuilt teacher identity causing strong affective and emotional responses for the individual. Unless policy and practice acknowledges the emotional impact of change and development upon teachers, teachers will not be enabled to build the supportive networks of mutually respectful and trusting staff relationships needed to meet the reality of the daily challenges.

Yet:

“despite impossible workloads, external pressures, unreasonable change agendas and all the other dissatisfiers that plague their work, teachers ultimately do what they do for the children.” (Hargreaves, 1999: 87)

It is with this in mind that teachers can be seen to move towards the development of inclusive school cultures built upon often challenging principles of social equity, shared responsibility

and increased participation and access for all pupils, which may at times conflict with externally imposed agendas for change and development (Kugelmass, 2004; Hargreaves, 1999).

Teaching and learning, and issues associated with them are often seen in “overly instrumental and cognitive terms: there is a neglect of the way in which they are embedded in the lives of both children and teachers.” (Hammersley, 1999: 1)

This study seeks to address this issue. The complex affective issues associated with the notion of developing inclusive practices are emphasized in an attempt to move away from reductionist and irrelevant models and blueprints for inclusive school development.

The meaning of inclusion within this study

Any definition of inclusion will always be problematic, and dependent upon cultural and contextual interpretations to provide its situated meaning. Acknowledging the problematic nature of the concept of ‘inclusion’ and ‘inclusive education’, there is however a need to specify the situated and individual meaning ascribed to the concept within the context of this study, in order to ensure shared understanding and meaning making with the reader:

“Any attempt to deepen our understanding of inclusion and exclusion has to start from a definition of terms.” (Booth, 2003: 1)

It must be noted that this definition is not provided as a blueprint definition for others to use, but instead as an individual reflection upon the key issues which are of central significance in relation to the notion of developing inclusive practices for me. This draws upon a range of personal experiences (not only in teaching, researcher and advisory capacities, but also as a parent with aspirations and principles for my own children within current educational systems), and also upon my interpretation of a range of policy, research and literature sources. The discussion that I present is also not offered as my ‘definitive’ account of the meaning of inclusion. Instead, it must be emphasized that my own philosophical, professional and academic understandings of the notion are ever changing to reflect the differing tensions and contradictions that arise between inbuilt value systems, imposed government policies and the practical reality of implementing inclusive practices within current educational systems.

The focus for inclusion within this study is concerned with the development of an inclusive and equitable education for all. It moves on from the narrow definition of inclusion as associated with those pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, and instead emphasizes the importance of the inclusive experiences of all pupils. A simplistic focus on pupils with SEN, and also upon reductionist and stereotyped categories of ‘vulnerable groups’ is therefore avoided within the study, although is apparent within some of the data drawn from the staff members.

Much focus (particularly through government research) has been given to identifying the 'problems' and 'deficiencies' with some schools practices: the so called 'failing schools' or 'Schools facing Extremely Challenging Circumstances' (MacBeath et al, 2007), and also to identifying good practice in improving schools, leading to the identification of lists of successful or effective 'strategies' or 'characteristics' to be implemented to improve educational practices in other schools.

This study takes an alternative view. Rather than identifying the 'factors' used by schools in an attempt to suggest replication through adherence to a set of principles, this research provides a rich non-judgemental account of the experiences of staff members within a school in relation to how they perceive inclusive practices have been developed. This perspective is then used to deepen understanding about, and add meaning to the existing tensions highlighted within the inclusion debate.

This study has been concerned with providing an account of the individual processes that two schools have gone through over a period of two years to develop their own unique inclusive practices. The underlying assumption within the study is that inclusive practices must be unique and individual to different schools, and that whilst general over-arching principles may support the development of understanding about inclusive values and practices, the adherence to models which advocate application and transferability of simplistic checklists or standards for inclusive practice simply undermine the possibility for fully inclusive practices to evolve in any meaningful way. This assumption draws upon the previous discussions in relation to the importance of underlying school culture, which cannot be imposed or planned for in a mechanical and linear way. Instead, the development of inclusive practices is therefore dependent upon a complex and unique interplay between the developing school culture and the interactions, relationships and emotions of staff members on a day to day basis.

Within this study, the term 'developing inclusive practices' is purposefully used instead of 'inclusion' as this emphasizes an understanding that inclusion is not a 'destination' to be reached and ticked off a long list of school improvement priorities. Inclusion is also not a specific achievable or definable 'state'. Rather, it is a complicated web of supporting and conflicting values and practices which go together to make up the inclusive practices which support pupils within a school. Often the specific action, strategy or practice itself is not seen as the most significant issue. Instead, it is the values, assumptions and interactions underlying the implementation of those actions and strategies which provide useful information about the particular inclusive practices which have evolved within given school context.

This study acknowledges the fact that ‘inclusive practices’ cannot be predetermined. They are not always specific actions and processes. Rather the development of inclusive practices often involves issues relating to culture, values, emotions and relationships. These cannot be ticked off against a list of standards or criteria. Rather the research methodology itself, and the overall approach to developing understanding of inclusive practices has highlighted the need for a flexible and emergent research design, suitable for enabling rich data to emerge. In this way, the research process described within this study has the:

“Flexibility necessary for an emergent rather than planned process – where possibilities open up along the way that could not be foreseen and planned for at the start.” (Howes et al, 2009: 50)

The study acknowledges the contextual nature of an individual school’s inclusive practices and how these have evolved out of the unique set of circumstances and relationships both internal to the school and those external factors relating to the local community and the wider political context. It is recognized that ‘inclusive practices’ are subjective, and that some practices, whilst deemed to be inclusive within the context of that setting at that particular times in response to a particular need, may, in a different school, or at a different time, or in response to a different need, actually appear exclusionary.

Inclusion and inclusive principles are essentially human constructs, internally constructed by individuals in relation to others around them. The account of inclusive practices presented here is seen as a ‘snap-shot’ in time. It is not an account of a finished product. Rather, this is an account of the experience of developing inclusive practices within two schools up until the summer of 2009. After this time, the experience and the practices will be reconstructed to respond to changing and ever-evolving circumstances, situations and human relationships.

The issue of developing inclusive practice is seen as inextricably linked with the process of school development. This term is used in preference to school improvement to denote concerns over the notion that schools can be expected to continually exponentially ‘improve’ (MacGilchrist, 2003). Development suggests that schools are involved in an ongoing cycle of change and improvement, although at times the steps may be small- and the ‘improvements’ not measureable in terms of external quantifiable measures such as test scores and league tables.

Calls to move towards a re-examination and critique of the “reality of a divided and unequal society” (Wrigley, 2003: 98) and to consider new ways to provide more equitable opportunities for all, mirror those within the inclusion debate. Wrigley (2003, 2006) continually poses the challenge to critically reconsider the underlying values and assumptions within education and society, and, whilst he does not use the actual language of ‘inclusion’, positioning himself

instead within the school improvement field; yet the challenges and language in terms of seeking a more equitable and socially just society mirror those presented within the inclusion field. The links are clear, with inclusion and school improvement (or development) inextricably linked to a common cause to review the purposes, values and aims of education within a changed and changing diverse society.

This study focuses upon inclusion as an ongoing process, dynamically linked with the overall process of school development. For both processes, it is understood that it involves a:

“journey of hope based on shared beliefs and values and real commitment.” (Wrigley, 2003: 45)

At times, an uncomfortable relationship between school improvement and inclusive practice strategies is identified, with wider school improvement priorities and agendas (such as the Standards Agenda) being seen to act as barriers to the effective development of inclusive practices for all. There is recognition that, despite the obvious similarities between the two fields, they have largely developed independently of each other, and in competing ways (Mittler, 1999). This tension is particularly marked where there is a continued focus upon test scores and league tables as a measure of improvement (Mittler, 1999):

“In national contexts such as our own where reform policies have been based on a rather narrow view of school effectiveness, strategies seeking to bring about school improvement can, in practice, act as a barrier to the development of educational practices that serve all students, particularly those in more unfavourable socioeconomic contexts.” (Ainscow & West, 2006: 3)

The issue of inclusion and developing inclusive practices is complex, and requires an approach which highlights the complexity, emphasizing “*changing realities.... and redefinition of cultures*” (Rassool, 2009: 134), rather than perpetuating an approach based upon:

“a world in which policy makers often seek the comforts of magic bullets that solve educational problems with one simple solution, and where commercial companies seek to solve the pressure on teachers’ time with off the shelf curricula and school improvement packages.” (Daniels et al, 2009: 1)

This study supports a much more complex view of inclusion, as being situated within a dynamic interaction of factors unique to the individual school context. In this way, it models an approach to inclusive school development which emphasizes the multi-dimensional “layered relationship between the institution, its outer context and the inner context of human interactions and dynamics” (Corbett, 2001: 35). The factors are not simply seen to be connected with the simplistic implementation of specific actions and processes, but are rather seen to be contextualized and dependent upon a range of more affective and morally driven principles and attitudes which frame how staff interact and relate to each other and to the pupils, and which contribute to the development of ever changing inclusive school cultures.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Overview

This research was designed to enable an exploration of the issue of developing inclusive practices through the accounts of practitioners within two case study schools. The approach purposefully centred on a non-judgemental and non evaluative research methodology which emphasized the individuality of the particular schools and staff members experiences of developing inclusive practices. An ethnographic case study approach was therefore developed to gather data in an appropriate and effective way, utilizing a multi-method qualitative research approach (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 8) of adapting research tools to gather data in a range of different ways, including through interviews, learning conversations, observation, questionnaires and participation in staff meetings.

The research approach evolved through the process of working with the two case study schools. At the outset, I planned to work solely with the headteachers and SENCOs of the two schools to gather data relating to how the development of inclusive practices was prioritized within the two schools, and which specific individual actions and processes had been implemented by each school to respond to the issue of developing inclusive practices. Semi-structured interviews were planned to be utilized over a period of a year to gather a range of data from the identified staff members. Very soon, I identified that to be able to make sense of the data that was being gathered, and to understand them and interpret them within the context of the individual school, further in depth research tools would need to be developed. This linked with my increased understanding of the importance of culture upon the development of inclusive practices, and a general move within my research approach away from expecting or looking for simplistic examples of actions and processes which support the development of inclusive practices, into a research approach which enabled me to explore more fully the underlying foundation of contextual and emotional factors which impacted upon the school.

This led to the development of Phase 2 of the research, which involved observations of different areas of the school at different times (including assemblies, staffroom, staff meetings and classroom visits), and learning conversations with staff members.

Through Phase 2 a new focus emerged, requiring the development of Phase 3 of the research. Phase 3 focused upon the issue of interpretation and meaning making, and included learning conversations and strategic focus group discussions to discuss, interpret and validate emerging themes from the data. This linked closely to the underlying principle of ensuring that this research does not simply attempt to validate or evaluate existing models of developing inclusive practice. Instead, the emphasis was to develop a methodological approach which enabled me as researcher to put to one side my prior knowledge about how inclusion is supposed to work, and

focus upon listening to and exploring the accounts and experiences of staff members within two case study schools. This was difficult and a tension existed between my prior knowledge, expertise and experiences, and the research approach that I chose to use. However, the value in developing the particular research approach has been to provide a rich exploration and description of the actual issues impacting upon a school and its staff members, without imposing external models, conceptual frameworks or expectations of practice. This approach has enabled my own thinking to move forward from a focus on the individual and specific aspects of developing inclusive practices, and to understand how this is contextualized by the underlying culture, staff relationships and emotional wellbeing of the school as a whole.

The research study considered the following key questions:

1. What are the understandings of inclusion from the perspectives of the practitioner, the government and current literature, and how do they complement and contradict each other?
2. What are the individual elements that schools identify as significant to the development of their inclusive practices?
3. How do contextual factors impact upon the development and prioritization of inclusive practices?

Research Question 1 was explored through the critical review of literature which has then been compared and contrasted with the accounts given by staff members of their understanding of inclusion during interviews (Phase 1), learning conversations (Phase 2) and during the activities within the focus staff meeting (Phase 3).

Research Questions 2 and 3 were explored through the use of supporting documentary evidence provided by each school, and through the interviews (Phase 1), learning conversations and strategic focus group meetings (Phase 2). Issues and tensions raised through the staff members accounts have then been discussed and reflected upon in relation to existing literature and research.

The Research Timeline presented below (Fig. 4) provides an overview of the different phases: the focus for the research at different times, and how research tools were used to support the gathering of evidence. This is further explored and explained through the chapter.

Phase:	Time Period:	Focus for research:	Research Tools Used
Phase 1	September 2007- April 2008	Gathering contextual information Working with HT and SENCO to gather perspectives	Semi structured interviews Observation of assemblies Gathering documentary information
Phase 2	April 2008- September 2008	Working with a range of teachers to gather more information about the experience of developing inclusive practices. Exploring how inclusive practices are discussed and negotiated through school led staff meetings	Classroom visits (observation) Learning conversations with class teachers (interviews) Strategic focus group meetings Observation of staff meetings
Phase 3	September 2008- December 2008	Interpretation and meaning making- exploring the key themes to arise from the data with staff members to validate interpretations. Staff meeting input to explore staff individual and shared definitions of inclusion	Learning conversations Strategic focus group meetings Staff meeting input: questionnaire and brainstorming activities. Extension and updating of documentary information

Fig. 4- Research Timeline.

(see also Overview of Data: Appendix 1)

Personal Values and Research

My own values, as well as my underlying understanding of inclusive principles were central to the development of an appropriate research methodology. It was important to me that decisions about methodological practices were guided by my own ontological and epistemological assumptions. Choices about the particular research approach and research tools to be used throughout the study were therefore firmly influenced by personal rather than mechanical issues. As Cohen et al (2007) acknowledge:

“This view moves us beyond regarding research methods as simply a technical exercise and as concerned with understanding the world; this is informed by how we view our world(s), what we take understanding to be, and what we see as the purposes of understanding.” (Cohen et al, 2007: 5)

The methodological approach was built upon general principles of qualitative research advocated by Denzin & Lincoln (2003), and emphasized the importance for me of:

- The need to observe and describe social situations
- The need to acknowledge and value the complexity of the social situation
- The centrality of meaning making and interpretation

This research was firmly based upon a ‘descriptive’ approach (Stephens, 2009) and sought to find out in more detail issues around ‘what is happening?’ in terms of the issue of developing

inclusive practices. The general qualitative research approach that I took was therefore developed to provide “a ‘window’ through which we might ‘see’ and comment on significant social issues.” (Miller, 1997: 2)

As a result of this focus upon gathering data through describing situations and presenting accounts of the context through the words of the participants, there was an emphasis upon the importance of flexibility in research approach. This was important for a number of reasons. It was understood from the beginning of the research process that I would be gathering data from busy practitioners working in challenging contexts. Rigid prescriptions and timescales were therefore not appropriate and I ensured that my data collection strategies were as flexible and responsive to the participants own needs and time constraints as possible. During the process of the research, it also emerged that the originally planned research tools and approaches needed to be developed and adapted throughout the research in order to more effectively enable me to capture the rich data and description that was aimed for. In this way, I adopted the notion of becoming a methodological “bricoleur”, using a range of different methods and approaches to produce a “montage” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 6). The approach that was developed has therefore been purposefully flexible: “endlessly creative and interpretive” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 37).

The relationships that I developed as a researcher within the two case study schools were important to me. I did not approach the schools, or conduct myself through the research process as ‘the expert’. Instead, I positioned myself as an educational practitioner with in-depth knowledge of schools, and as an academic with an interest in further extending my knowledge of the realities of developing inclusive practices within schools. Staff members within the schools were assured that within the context of their school, they were the experts, and that I was there to learn as much as possible about the issue of developing inclusive practice from their particular perspective. In this respect, the staff members were positioned as the experts: the only ones who would be able to understand and comment upon the complex interaction of internal and external factors upon their experience of developing inclusive practices (Stables, 2009). This is a very particular methodological position to take, and early writing drafts (see Appendix 2) evidence the reflection and introspection which formed a key part of how I navigated the tensions which existed between my own experiences and knowledge bases and the particular research approach that I wanted to adopt.

The methodological approach that I developed also purposefully moved away from more traditional and common forms of evaluative research, often used when exploring educational issues, including educational inclusion, to attempt to capture and evaluate educational approaches with the ultimate goal to then transfer these into other school settings. Action

research, and collaborative action research have also become accepted and useful research methodologies utilized within research which is focused upon identifying barriers and aspects of school practice in need of change and development and working with school staff to affect a change through collaborative problem-solving research techniques.

The research approach used within this study purposefully moved away from these research practices. It was based upon a belief of the need to capture the lived reality and perceptions about inclusion from the perspective of practitioners mediating the day to day challenges of implementing inclusive practices within schools. It moved away from a need to evaluate practices, and was not concerned with the effectiveness of particular strategies or approaches. Rather, the research methodology emphasized the need to acknowledge the interpretation of inclusion through the eyes of the staff members. The research methodology was non-judgemental, and did not make assumptions about the need to change: assumptions inherent within models of Action research or collaborative action research. Whilst there was not the intention to work with participants to plan and effect change, yet it was understood that through the process of talking with the staff members about their experiences and understandings of inclusion, ideas for change and development may be stimulated, and may be explored by the staff members themselves, independently of the planned research.

The need to remain non-judgemental throughout the research process was a central theme dominating my choice of research approach, evidenced within early entries within my Reflective Research Journal (see Appendix 3). As a reflective researcher I acknowledge that I approached the research with my own embedded values, but throughout, the purpose of the study was not to validate my own assumptions about developing inclusive practice, nor those from findings of other research studies. Instead, the purpose was to allow new findings to emerge from the data: through the accounts of the experience of developing inclusive practices from staff members from two case study schools. In this way, I purposefully moved away from the role that I hold within other aspects of my working practices, where I work as an advisor, consultant or critical friend with staff members to identify aspects of their practice which are not working and seek ways to improve them through context specific and relevant changes and developments to practice. In my working roles, I am therefore much more closely linked to the notion of a collaborative action researcher, and within the purposes of my other roles, I find this position to be an appropriate and effective one to take.

The tension however existed in the different positioning of myself as a researcher rather than as an advisor, consultant or critical friend within this particular research study. I purposefully chose to adopt a role which I cannot usually have within my other interactions with schools: one which is non-judgemental, seeks to make no evaluations of practices, but instead is there to listen to the experiences, and then to use these as a basis for reconsidering established literature

and research on the issue of developing inclusive practices. Throughout the research I was focused upon acknowledging the tension which exists between my own expertise, experiences and usual ways of working with schools, with the purposeful development of a very different research methodology. The value in developing this particular research approach for me, and for others, was to move away from fixed and assumed notions of practice, towards a richer understanding of the issue of developing inclusive practice through the accounts of practitioners actually coping with the reality within schools today.

The research provided opportunities to stimulate “principled interruptions” (Ainscow et al, 2006) in my own thinking and practice in supporting schools. My embedded knowledge and understandings were therefore not used as the model upon which the research has been built. Instead, I have tried to make what was to me very familiar (schools and issues around developing inclusive practice) strange (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995): by considering it not through my own perspective, but through the accounts and perspectives of other individuals.

It was then also hoped that this approach will help to provide opportunities for others reading this research study to reconsider the issues through new eyes: to reconsider their prior knowledge and the knowledge gained from established literature and research, through the perspective provided by the schools described here.

The interaction between myself as researcher and the case with whom I worked was seen to be unique (Stake, 1995), with the particular research approach that I have developed being

“profoundly linked to the individual history of the ethnographer.” (Baszanger & Dodier, 2004: 12)

Although the tension existed between my own expertise, experiences and knowledge about schools and issues around developing inclusive practices, this was used within this study to support the research process, and to enable a more “authentic insider interpretation” (Atkinson et al, 2003: 42) of the issues. Throughout, rather than trying to eliminate this issue, I purposefully acknowledged the tension and was “reflexive in trying to set the data against this context.” (Brewer, 2000: 43)

In this way, familiarity with the issue and with educational settings enabled me to produce a “*locally interpreted*”, “*emic*” account of the issues (Denzin, 2009: 98).

The methodological approach that I developed helps to balance and enhance my usual work in supporting schools, by giving me the opportunity to stand back from my usual perspective of critical friend, collaborative action researcher, consultant: someone who is supposed to have a range of answers and knowledge to support the schools; and to reconsider the issues from different perspectives.

This new perspective will enhance my future work with schools, giving me a broader understanding of not only specific actions, processes and features of inclusive schools and practices, but also of the embedded issues which are so influential in impacting upon a schools ability to sustain the development of those inclusive practices.

Research Approach: Ethnographic Case Study

Two schools were approached to become case studies for the research. A case study approach was seen to be appropriate as it linked with the desire to conduct a “detailed examination of a setting” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003: 54).

The accounts of the schools are presented as two separate case studies, as this further reinforces the underlying principles within this study that inclusive practices can only be considered through an awareness of the individual contextual factors impacting upon that practice from the perspective of the individual school. Thus although there is more than one school described, it is not presented as a “multi-case” or “multi-site” case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003: 62). The account of each school stands alone, and the use of the two cases was developed to enable further opportunities to explore the different individual aspects which impact upon the development of inclusive practices within schools. In this way, the case studies were used to “capture cases in their uniqueness” (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000: 3) rather than to present generalizations.

Case studies are increasingly being considered effective and appropriate ways to conduct in depth research into educational issues, to enable “investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (Yin, 2008: 4), although Bassey (1999) calls for a “reconstruction of educational case study” as they have lost some of the “clarity of purpose” (ibid: 57) that case study research used to have. Bassey (1999) therefore argues for educational case study to be seen as an empirical enquiry which is bounded by time and space and which looks at interesting aspects of educational issues within natural contexts.

Stake (2003) sees case study not as a methodology, but as a “choice of what is to be studied” (Stake, 2003: 134); although others, including, Yin (1993) and Creswell (2007) see it instead as a “strategy of inquiry, a methodology” (Creswell, 2007: 73). Over the process of this research study, case study was seen to be most closely aligned to Stakes’ notion, with the case study providing the definition of what was being studied. Linked to this, other underlying methodological principles provided the clear methodological approach, which in the context of this study is defined as ethnographic case study.

Within case study, Stake (1995) finds it helpful to define different types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective case study. In this study, elements of both the intrinsic and instrumental case study most closely links with the approach taken to conducting research. The study focused upon the desire to reach “better understanding of the particular case” (Stake, 2003: 136) which is a key principle within intrinsic case studies. There is an acknowledgement within this approach that the case is not chosen because it is seen to be representative of all cases, but rather that it is useful in its “particularization” (Stake, 1995) of the individual case: the “ordinariness” (Stake, 2003: 136) of the case is seen to be the key strength. This notion of ‘ordinariness’ was central in the approach to case selection within this study. The schools were not chosen to represent ‘best practice’ in developing inclusive practice. Judgements and evaluations were not made relating to how they were effectively achieving inclusive practice. Rather, the focus throughout was on exploring the accounts of ordinary schools coping with common tensions and issues. This approach highlights the complexity and tensions existing within ordinary schools, which can often go ignored within studies which focus upon schools working in exceptional circumstances or developing exceptional practices. In line with principles within the instrumental case study approach, the case, or schools, were not just studied because of their intrinsic interest. The study was not so much concerned just with what the individual school has done and is doing. Instead, elements of Stake’s intrinsic case study were linked to the desire for the case to be supportive and to provide the background for other discussions, “facilitating our understanding” (Stake, 2003: 137) of the complex issue of developing inclusive practices within schools

The approach developed also had links with Bassey’s (1999) story-telling and picture drawing case study approach, and Yin’s (1993) descriptive case study approach, emphasizing the fact that approaches are flexible and that sharp distinctions or lines cannot always be drawn between them (Stake, 2003; Wellington, 2000).

The complexity of the individual situation was always highlighted, with greater understanding of that complexity sought, rather than a narrowing and simplifying of the complex issues. The study emphasizes the need to focus upon gaining deeper understanding and meaning from often “taken for granted” situations (Delamont, 2002: 7).

There is a danger that:

“many social settings, and especially educational institutions, are too familiar. Central features of education are so taken for granted that they are invisible.” (Delamont, 2002: 48)

This helps to explain why some of the inequalities and exclusionary processes existing within the current educational system are perpetuated. There becomes a point when the underlying principles, assumptions and practices are so taken for granted that they become ‘invisible’: unchallenged and unexamined. An important feature of the research approach, in the questions

asked of the staff members, and in the approach to data analysis, was therefore to provide opportunities to:

“reconsider thinking and practice... it is about making what is strange familiar and what is familiar strange.” (Ainscow, 1999: 2)

Within this study, this led to “a commitment to making the familiar strange” (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995: vi), through in-depth discussion and reflection upon particular experiences and realities of developing inclusive practice. Tensions, contradictions and dilemmas inherent within the reality of developing inclusive practices were identified: not to challenge or judge them to reduce them to generalizations about what works and what does not work, but rather to highlight the complexity of the issue. This also links to Stakes’ (2003) notion of the focus within intrinsic case study upon what is interesting and important about the case “within its own world” (ibid: 140) within the context of the school itself, and the education system within which its staff members understand it to operate. This is said to often be different from what is important within the world of researchers, academics and theorists. The focus was therefore upon taking a position a step away from how researchers and theorists conceptualise the process of developing inclusive practices: to a methodological position which positioned the individual interpretations and understandings of the issue from the perspectives of the practitioners at the centre. The potential for case studies to provide opportunities to “give voice [to people] rather than to use them as respondents or even as informants” (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000: 3) was therefore emphasized.

Principles of an ethnographic approach were also used to enhance the methodological approach and reflect the underlying principles governing this research study. Ethnographic principles central to this study therefore include:

- The study of naturally occurring settings (Brewer, 2000: 6) with a focus on a particular, and specified location, event or setting (Pole & Morrison, 2003)
- A focus on capturing and interpreting or developing understanding of shared social meanings and practices (Brewer, 2000; Creswell, 2007, Wellington, 2000)
- The use of a range of different research tools to gather data, with a flexible approach being used (Brewer, 2000: 19, Pole & Morrison, 2003)

Ethnography is considered to focus on contextualized descriptions, producing “rich description” (Geertz, 1973), enabling understanding of a culture, case or situations from an insider perspective (Pole & Morrison, 2003; Robson, 2002). The linking of ethnographic research principles with a basic case study approach therefore emphasised the focus upon grounded and contextualized understandings and meaning making within the research. Indeed, the

complementary links between the two methodological approaches are recognized by others, for example Brewer (2000), and Stephens (2009) who notes that:

“ethnography shares many of the characteristics of the case study with its concern for *‘bounded meaning’ and exploration in depth.*” (Stephens, 2009: 51)

For the purposes of this study, ethnographic features have been used to construct the story around the case and to add further depth and understanding to the issues explored within two case study schools. In this respect, the study shares many similarities with the study of inclusive school cultures completed by Nind et al (2005), both in methodology as it used a “case study approach drawing on ethnographic methods” (ibid: 193); and also in underlying principles. As with this study, Nind et al (2005) emphasise that their “*agenda was not to find out ‘what works’ in inclusive education and to report it back... ours was a much more exploratory and reflexive agenda*” (Nind et al, 2005: 200).

Such an approach is not easy to sustain: tensions emerge and there is a need for a continual process of:

“critical reflection on the relationship between self and the research process [which] involves exploring and exposing the hidden taken-for-granted aspects of the social relations of research production.” (Clough & Barton, 1995: 4)

The Research Process

Planning for the structure of the research process was dependent upon both my own values and philosophies (Hollingsworth & Dybdahl, 2007), and the interactions and relationships developed with school staff. There was therefore an understanding that the potential to be able to plan ahead was always limited by the fact that I would need to fit in with and respond to the complex situations that evolved during research visits to a busy school (Kugelmass, 2004). Thus the:

“Research design [was] a reflective process which operates throughout every stage of [the] project.” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 24)

Selecting and Accessing Schools

Two research schools were identified and approached to participate in the research. The decision about which schools to approach was problematic due to the nature and possible conflict and tensions between my role as researcher and my other roles within the education system in the particular Local Authority (see Chapter 4- Ethics).

Colleagues supported me by providing information about which schools may be approachable, through their personal contacts. It was emphasized that the schools should not be identified by being ‘outstanding examples of inclusive practice’ but rather by their ability to engage with an ongoing research process involving reflection and discussion about the development of their practices. Both schools needed to be schools where key members of staff had not attended previous training delivered by me, as I wanted to ensure that a natural relationship could

develop between myself as researcher and staff members: one that was not built upon prior assumptions. Even at this stage of the research process problematic tensions were identified. As Elbaz-Luwisch (2007) notes:

“Clark (1986) expressed the concern that researchers had a tendency to study teachers who were too much like themselves. He suggested that researchers were inclined to work with successful and articulate teachers, who were predisposed to be thoughtful and reflective about their work.” (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2007, p371)

The ‘gate-keepers’ for this research, the headteachers within the schools, had specific reasons for agreeing to allow the school to participate in the research. Part of this was their particular approach to reflective practice and the development of inclusive practices within their schools. Both headteachers were intrinsically motivated by the notion of inclusion, and wanted opportunities to explore the tensions which exist within the current educational system. In this way, the ‘gate-keepers’ and many of the staff within the school were very similar in nature to myself.

The research process naturally evolved through the research period to reflect not only central philosophical and methodological principles guiding me as a researcher, but also key themes and understandings as they occurred during the process. At a very practical level, this directly informed the development of a three phase approach to the research. These three phases, reflect very different approaches by me to my role as researcher, and evidence a growing confidence and understanding of the particular approach that I wanted to take as I gained experience and made key strategic methodological decisions (see early critical writing about the development of the research phases in Appendix 4).

Throughout the research phases, a range of research tools were used to enhance and enable the collection of rich data from the school settings enabling “pluralism of method but not methodological pluralism.” (Pole & Morrison, 2003: 8)

Thus, whilst different research tools were used to capture meaning in different ways, yet all of them were linked within the same over-arching methodological approach built upon the philosophical principles influencing the whole research process.

Phase 1:

Phase 1 of the research process took place during September 2007 and April 2008, with each school being visited three times between September 2007 and December 2007. Time between January 2008 and April 2008 (whilst I was on maternity leave) was then used to review the contextual data gathered, start data analysis processes, and evaluate the direction and purpose of the research approach and process.

At the beginning of the research process, it was anticipated that I would visit each research school four times over the 18 month research period. This reflected my thinking at the time about the nature of my role as researcher, entering the setting and collecting data in quite a distanced and formal way.

During Phase 1 the focus was upon gathering contextual information from the headteacher and SENCO about the school and factors impacting upon the development of inclusive practices within the school.

This was primarily planned through the development of a semi-structured interview format which focused upon the following open questions, with opportunities for exploration and discussion of issues as they emerged:

- Could you describe the context of your school?
- How would you define the culture/ ethos of the school?
- Describe key factors which impact upon the context and culture of your school (positive and negative factors)

Fig. 5: Phase 1 Interview Schedule

Interviews were seen to be a “powerful way to gain insight into educational and other important social issues” (Seidman, 2006: 14), and were seen as a central, although not unproblematic tool (Schostak, 2006).

At this point in the research process, the semi-structured interview schedule, lasting approximately 45 minutes was used to gather data from the following staff members:

School N:	School S:
30.10.07: HT	11.09.07: HT
6.12.07: SENCO	15.10.07: STA (Senior Teaching Assistant) SENCO FLO (Family Liaison Officer)

Fig. 6: Staff members involved in Phase 1 interviews

Preliminary observations within the school contexts were also undertaken. In both schools, this included observations during guided tours of the school contexts led by key members of staff, observations of whole school assemblies and observations of staffroom interactions. Fieldnotes were written up at the end of every school visit, and were used to capture a range of information: both factual and reflective. A specific fieldnote format was put together using and adapting principles put forward by Bogdan & Biklen (2003: 113) (see Appendix 5). The format that was developed aimed to provide a framework to support the identification and recording of both descriptive and reflective fieldnotes, and included the following key sections:

Contextual Fieldnotes:

- Research Setting
- Date of visit
- Time
- Nature of visit
- Fieldnote number
- Title of notes

Descriptive Fieldnotes:

- Portraits of the subjects (full descriptions)
- Reconstruction of dialogue
- Description of physical setting (pencil drawings/ plans/ maps etc)
- Accounts of particular events (list who was involved/ in what nature/ nature of action...)
- Depiction of activities (detailed descriptions of sequence of behaviour)
- Observer's behaviour (own behaviour and assumptions)

Reflective Fieldnotes:

- Reflections on Analysis (what am I learning/ trends, patterns, themes emerging/ connections with pieces of data?)
- Reflections on Method (how are procedures/ strategies working? Rapport with participants? Successes and problems encountered?)
- Reflections on ethical conflicts and dilemmas
- Reflections on the observer's frame of mind (encounters that provide breakthroughs to new ways of thinking/ assumptions)
- Points of clarification (correct or clarify informational errors)
- Planning for the next visit:

Fig. 7: Key information recorded on the fieldnote template

The fieldnotes were used to capture details of each research visit within the school setting, and were written immediately after the research visit in order to ensure that memories were captured as accurately as possible.

The detailed structure of the fieldnotes (which were used throughout all phases of the research process) supported the collection of a range of information and immediate reflections upon the research and enabled the identification of themes, trends and issues of methodological tension and conflict. Through the linking of this rather formal process, with less formal reflective research journals and diaries, I was enabled to gain a greater understanding of my role and position within the research, and to reflect upon the implications of it for the research that I was undertaking. It was understood that by immediately capturing thoughts, feelings and observations I could start to not only make sense of them to support the development of any theoretical frameworks (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003), but also use them as a way to engage with and understand the feelings that the research visit raised within me about the purpose of the research or my role as researcher (Ely et al, 1991).

During Phase 1, school based documentary evidence was also gathered. Both schools were asked to provide examples of any documentary evidence that they thought would be useful in supporting my understanding of their context and the development of their inclusive practices. In this I was purposefully not prescriptive in terms of the type of documentary information that I required. Instead, I wanted the school staff themselves to identify which documents may be useful to me, and to reflect upon which would provide details of their developing inclusive practices. At later points in the research process, other supplementary documentary evidence was provided: often linking in with OFSTED visits and inspections where the reports were seen to externally validate the schools practices and judgements:

Phase 1 evidence gathered:

- School Prospectus
- SEN Policy
- School Improvement Plan

Phase 2 and 3 evidence gathered:

- School Self Evaluation Form (SEF)
- OFSTED Reports
- Class profiles and reports shared with OFSTED
- Staff meeting inputs

Fig. 8: Documentary evidence gathered

Additional statistical contextual information was also requested by me to provide more detail about specific variables impacting upon the context of the school. This included information about:

- The number of pupils on roll
- The age range of the school
- The number of teaching staff
- The number of support staff
- The % of pupils with SEN
- The % of pupils with EAL
- The % of pupils who transferred to grammar school at the end of Year 6.
- The % of pupils on Free School Meals
- The % of pupil mobility over the period of a year.

Fig. 9: Contextual information gathered

Phase 2:

Phase 2 took place between April 2008 and July 2008. Building on from the experiences within the schools during Phase 1, with my growing understanding and confidence in the particular

methodological approach that I wished to take, Phase 2 was a key phase in which new research tools and terminologies were introduced. The research approach changed, from being predominantly centred around gathering data through the perspective of senior leaders within the schools, to a wider mixed methodological approach utilizing observations within classes and staff meetings; learning conversations with class teachers; strategic focus group discussions and time line activities with senior leaders.

During this phase, I negotiated with both headteachers a more direct research approach, which involved me finding out more about the realities of inclusion from the perspectives of the staff members. I asked to be able to attend a staff meeting which may be relevant to the area that I was researching. The purpose of this was twofold. Firstly, I used it as an opportunity to reintroduce myself and the purpose of the research to all teaching staff. Secondly, the staff meeting gave me the opportunity to observe at first-hand how issues were discussed, negotiated and agreed between staff members to ensure shared meaning. At the headteachers suggestion I therefore attended the following school-led staff meetings:

School and Date:	Focus and Lead:
School N- 23.6.08	Reviewing the School Improvement Plan- led by the headteacher
School S- 30.6.08	Provision and practice for pupils who are Gifted and Talented- led by the SENCO.

Fig. 10: School-led staff meetings

During the staff meetings, an open invitation was given asking for staff members to volunteer themselves to work with me during my next 2 research visits.

Key research tools were developed for this phase, and I became particularly concerned with developing an appropriate use of vocabulary and terminology to reflect my particular research approach. I therefore talked to staff members during the staff meetings about my desire to undertake some classroom visits, followed by learning conversations with the class teacher whose class I had visited. Strategic focus group discussions were also introduced during this phase of the research process as an opportunity for a wider group of senior leaders to work with me to reflect upon significant factors impacting upon the development of inclusive practices within their school setting through timeline activities and discussions. This open invitation resulted in the following classroom visits, learning conversations and strategic focus group discussions being set up and completed:

School N:	School S:
24.6.08- Year 3/ 4 Classroom Visit and Learning Conversation Year 3 Classroom Visit and Learning Conversation Strategic Focus Group Discussion with SENCO.	17.6.08- Year 5 Classroom Visit and Learning Conversation Year 2 Classroom Visit and Learning Conversation Strategic Focus Group Discussion with HT and SENCO
3.7.08- Year 5 Classroom Visit and Learning Conversation Strategic Focus Group Discussion with HT and SENCO	7.7.08- Year 4 Classroom Visit and Learning Conversation Year 1 Classroom Visit and Learning Conversation

Fig. 11: Phase 2 Classroom visits and learning conversations

The Classroom Visit:

The classroom visit became a central tool within the methodology at Phase 2, and acknowledged my growing understanding of the importance of underlying culture and context. I was uncomfortable about using observation within the context of the research with the schools as a result of the strong connotations with OFSTED inspection and regular classroom monitoring being linked to the accountability and inspection regime within schools today. This conflicted with the positioning of myself and my research within the schools. Observation, however, within the other context of me as researcher, was acknowledged to be a central tool within the ethnographic case study approach that I had developed. Within both ethnography and case study research, observation has increasingly been given more emphasis as the value of the “in situ observation of concrete sequences of activities” (Baszanger & Dodier, 2004: 9) has been highlighted.

Linked with this has also been a developing understanding of the need to contextualize observations, particularly of abstract and difficult to measure concepts such as ‘culture’ within “dialogic relationships with members of the group” (Angrosina & Perez, 2003: 107). In this there is a shift away from the ethnographic observer as someone who “thought of themselves as objective researchers extrinsic to the social settings they studied” (Angrosina & Perez, 2003: 135), to a focus on a meaningful interaction and dialogue between researcher and participants. This certainly links with the conceptual basis for the development of observation within this study.

The introduction of focused observation into my research methods was therefore carefully positioned away from evaluative and judgemental methods of observation, and instead framed within the overall purpose of providing me with a better understanding of the situation and day to day realities of teaching within the staff members own classrooms. Observation was seen as a complex methodological tool reflecting the tensions which existed between my positioning of

myself as researcher; my own experiences and knowledge; the expectations placed on me by my research participants in terms of their expectations of my ‘expert’ knowledge; and their expectations and preconceptions about the use of methods such as ‘observation’ (see draft writing for planning the observation schedule in Appendix 6).

With prior invitation from the class teachers, I visited the classroom to observe the situation and practice, and then engaged the teacher in a learning conversation to gather data about their opinions and feelings about developing inclusive practices within the particular school setting. The developed observation-framework was used simply as a guide and prompt to focus my observations, and enable me to again “make the familiar strange” (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995), and to consider familiar practices through different perspectives, but few notes were taken: with no evaluative judgements made. Mostly, only plans of the classroom layout, including numbers of boys/ girls within the class were made. However, the opportunity of visiting the classroom immediately previous to having a discussion with the class teacher enabled me as researcher to have some shared understanding and experience with the teacher, through which to adapt and structure my research questions to more naturally fit in with the teachers actual teaching situation. References to experiences observed during the classroom visit were therefore often used to illuminate or initiate wider discussions about inclusive practices. Figure 12 (below) shows the observation schedule that was developed, although this was not used in any formal way, and instead was used simply to focus reflective thinking about the observation.

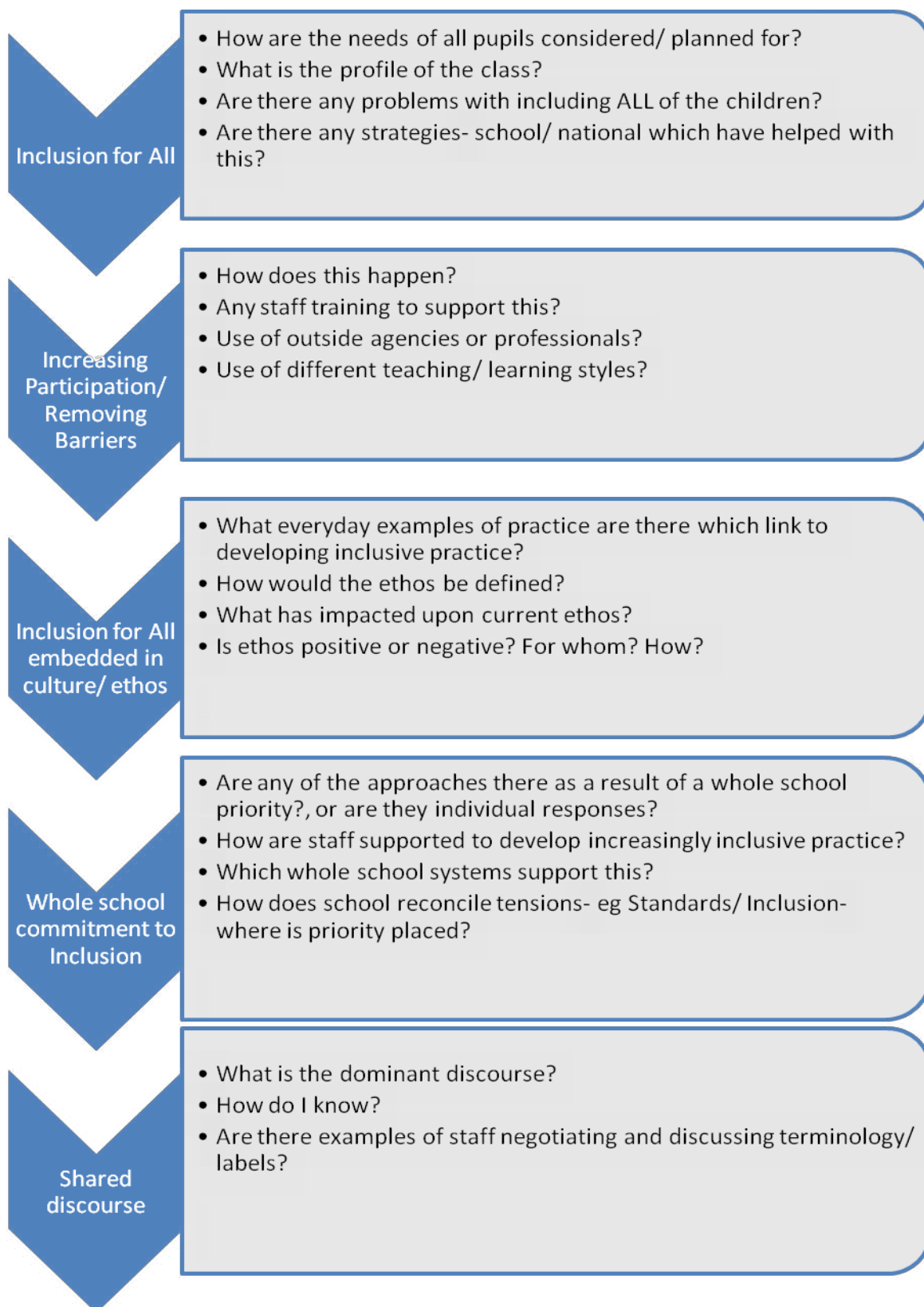


Fig. 12 Observation Schedule

Learning Conversation:

During Phase 2, interviews were restructured to become ‘learning conversations’. Others have likened the interview to a conversation (Charmaz 2006), and there are links between the “interview-conversations” and “grounded conversations” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) of life history research with the learning conversations which I developed within this study.

The change in emphasis within the interviews during this phase of the research process, links with Kvale & Brinkmann’s (2009) metaphor of the interviewer as ‘miner’ and as ‘traveller’ (ibid: 47), where the emphasis moved away from ‘mining’ information from participants to the staff members and I embarking on a shared journey to explore and reflect upon the mutual experience of a teaching situation. The notion that both interviewer and interviewee would learn from each other through self reflective and negotiated discussions about shared experiences and issues was reinforced. In this way, aspects of ‘feminist interviewing’ (Oakley, 1981; Fontana & Frey, 2003) have been adopted.

As with the interviews in Phase 1, a loose semi-structured interview schedule was developed to enable key themes and issues to be introduced. This was then interspersed with specific questions and comments directly related to the experience classroom visit (see example full Learning Conversation schedule in Appendix 7):

- How long have you taught at this school?
- What do you particularly enjoy about working here?
- What are the challenges of this school?
- Could you briefly give me a little bit more information about the class of children that you are teaching?- eg what types of needs do they have?
- Is this similar or different to the school as a whole?
- Do you think that the lesson that I saw was a ‘typical’ lesson?
- If no- what was different?
- Do you think that any of the children face barriers to learning?
- What are these barriers?
- What do you as teacher have to do to support the children overcome these barriers?
- Are there problems with including all of the children?
- How do you think that the staff as a whole within this school, support each other to develop inclusive practice?- eg do you use any particular strategies/ have you had particular training/ is there a school based system of support?

Fig. 13: Key Questions from Phase 2 Learning Conversation schedule

The use of terminology around interviewing was again problematic to me, and emphasized the tensions which existed within the positioning of myself as researcher.

I wanted to move away from connotations of the interview as rather power heavy, dominant and distant exchanges between people, and instead wanted to acknowledge the complex interactional nature of the interview embedded within the methodological approach used throughout the study. The notion of the interview as an “inter-view” (Kvale & Brinkmann,

2009: 2) and as an encounter which “involves negotiations, calculations, interpretations” (Schostak, 2006: 15) was therefore central to the development of the concept of the learning conversation at this phase of the research process.

With the staff members, the active nature of the interview (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) was emphasized, with the interviews being seen as “*negotiated* accomplishments shaped by the contexts and situations in which they take place” (Fontana & Frey, 2003: 91). Staff members were positioned as the ‘experts’ reinforcing the underlying epistemological understanding of the complexity of the social situation, and the fact that meaning, interpretation and understanding can only be fully understood through the perspective of those embedded within the situation (Stables, 2009).

It was understood that through the interviews and learning conversations, reality was “*continually ‘under construction’*” (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004: 149), and that rather than providing a definitive account of one truth, simply a “repetition of familiar cultural tales” (Miller & Glassner, 2004: 125) may have been achieved. Within this study, however, it is this ‘repetition of familiar cultural tales’ which has been sought, as this has provided detail and insight into how practitioners mediate and interpret the conflicting and complex context of developing inclusive practices within the current educational system.

Whilst the notion of ‘interviewing’ had originally been problematic to me as a researcher, with the outside connotations of unequal power relationships, yet what emerged through the development of the interviews into learning conversations was a much more appropriate and comfortable style of interviewing which appropriately matched and reflected the overall principles and values governing the study as a whole. As fieldnotes reflected:

“Continue to be pleased with the responsive nature of my methodological approach. The interviews are great- real conversations.” (N4: 24.6.08)

“Interview/ discussion was very natural, and I felt that I have actually started to probe more effectively. I was able to use a very general structure to follow up on and probe all sorts of different issues with SENCO- and got some rich data.” (N5: 3.7.08)

“Feel much more at ease with the interview conversation style that I have adopted- I enjoy being able to talk to and listen to the participants with shared experiences and understandings.” (S3: 17.6.08)

Strategic Focus Group Discussions:

The strategic focus group discussion was developed to provide an opportunity to talk in detail with key members of staff involved in strategic leadership and decision making within the school setting, about the development of inclusive practices. In both schools it became the headteacher and SENCO that I worked with. A loose and flexible structure of open questions

was planned to act as a prompt to stimulate discussion within the groups (see also Strategic Focus Group Conversation in Appendix 8):

- What key incidents/ initiatives do you think have had an impact upon the development of the school?
- When did this happen?
- Would you say that at the time this was a positive or a negative experience?
- Why?
- How did it affect you/ other pupils?
- When we consider all of the key incidents/ initiatives that we have mapped- are there any key themes which stand out?
- What seems to have had the most impact upon the development of inclusive practices?
- Why do you think this is?
- Are there any key themes/ area that seem to be missing at the moment?
- Why do you think that these have been missed?- eg have they happened, but were forgotten? Or did they not happen? Why?

Fig. 14: Strategic Focus Group discussion prompts

For this activity, I adapted a ‘Timeline’ activity (Ainscow, 1999) and worked with the Senior Leaders to try to unpick key events and critical incidents (Sikes et al, 2001) within the development of the school which had impacted heavily, either in a negative or a positive way, on the overall development of inclusive practices.

A difficulty with this activity was that often planned time with the Senior Leaders had to be missed due to their pressures and commitments within the school setting. Within School N, although time was booked and we met together as a group, we were unable to complete the activity due to intensive interruptions over a situation with a challenging child. In School S, it was often difficult to find time when both the headteacher and the SENCO were available together to talk about the issues in any detailed or extended way. Data was therefore not formally able to be gathered using this planned research tool, and any information that was gathered has instead been used to enhance the contextual data and descriptions gathered through the other research tools.

Phase 3:

Phase 3 built upon the knowledge and understanding developed through the previous stages, acknowledging that meaning is “culturally and context bound” (Ainscow, 1999: 13). Opportunities were therefore explicitly planned to ensure that wherever possible “nuances of meaning” (ibid: 13) were drawn out and negotiated to ensure shared understanding. This was achieved through strategic focus group discussions and learning conversations in which key themes that emerged from the data were shared with the participants with opportunities for them to comment upon and share their interpretation of the issues or tensions. The notion of shared meaning and interpretation through an overarching respect for the staff members “own voices” (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000: 3) was therefore central at this stage of the research.

Opportunities for “respondent validation” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) were emphasized to ensure that the research study retained its central purpose to enable the production of a rich account of a unique situation.

As Becker (2000) notes, one of the major problems “*in any form of social research is reasoning from the parts we know to something about the whole they and parts like them make up.*” (Becker, 2000: 231)

The learning conversations and strategic focus group discussions therefore supported the creation of an understanding of the complex issue of developing inclusive practices “based on the parts we have been able to uncover” (Becker, 2000: 231) and validated by the staff members themselves, who alone would have an overarching understanding of how the themes impacted upon day to day practice and experience within the school (Stables, 2009). This supports the notion that researchers should be encouraged to consider how participants are supported to interpret and challenge the researchers interpretation of the data:

“this is not a call for handing over veto power, but only a call for conversation, negotiated interpretations, texts in which multiple interpretations flourish” (Fine et al, 2003: 200).

The following key themes were initially introduced and shared:

- Leadership
- Team approach
- Ability setting
- Views on inclusion
- Learning environment/ professional discourse and reflective practice

Fig. 15: Key themes shared during Phase 3 learning conversations and strategic focus group discussions

These themes were shared with the following staff members to enable interpretation and discussion about the issues arising from the individual school contexts, and further shared through a final discussion about the completed study with the headteachers at the end of the research period:

School N:	School S:
23.9.08- Year 6 class teacher Business Manager Year 3 class teacher Year 5 class teacher HT and Deputy Head	9.10.08- HT
30.11.09- HT	27.11.09- HT

Fig. 16: Phase 3 Learning Conversations

The focus staff meeting and staff questionnaires were also developed during Phase 3. These tools had not been anticipated at the outset of the research period, but were negotiated and agreed with the headteachers and staff members during the course of the research process. In both schools a staff meeting was led by me as researcher, with the purpose of providing opportunities for staff members to consider and reconsider their own understandings of inclusion, and to agree and negotiate the meaning of inclusion within the school as a whole. The same staff meeting format was agreed and used in both schools (see full Staff Meeting format in Appendix 9.)

1. Exploring individual understandings of the term ‘Inclusion’- individual ‘questionnaires’
2. Discussing and agreeing a general vision of Inclusion for the whole school.
3. Discussing and sharing factors that support and factors that hinder the general vision of Inclusion for the school.

Fig. 17: Overview of Staff Meeting format

The individual questionnaires formed one part of these activities (see Appendix 10), which also included group discussions and flip chart activities to identify barriers and strengths to developing inclusive practices within the school setting.

These methods were not seen to be central to the research methodology as a whole, but provided an efficient way of collating a range of data from a number of staff members. They also provided a useful opportunity for shared negotiation and discussion of meaning. Finally, it was considered both by myself as researcher and the headteachers to be a valuable exercise as a way to “disclose” (BERA, 2004: 10) or share parts of the research process, enabling the school as a whole to benefit from participating in the long term research study.

Data presentation and analysis methods

The presentation and analysis of the data reinforces the key principles and the positioning of myself as researcher embedded throughout the study, emphasizing the centrality of the staff members' own accounts of their experiences, by purposefully avoiding evaluative judgements. Use has been made of direct quotes of individuals, as "they speak in voices other teachers can understand" (Kugelmass, 2004: 43) and therefore provide a sincerity and emotional depth to the issues being discussed. These individual voices have been interwoven together both with other staff members from the two schools and my own narrative to provide a multi-vocal interpretation of the experience of developing inclusive practices. Despite my particular positioning of myself as researcher, with the staff members voices and accounts being central, tensions do exist, and I acknowledge that the way that I have represented and interpreted the staff members words may reflect as much about my values as about theirs. As Denzin (2009) notes:

"Representation, of course, is always self-presentation—that is, *the Other's presence is directly connected to the writers' self-presence* in the text.
The "Other" who is presented in the text is always a version of the researcher's self."
(Denzin, 2009: 91)

A composite, multi-vocal account has therefore been presented, which, while it may run the risk of "destroying the integrity of the data.... [by] cutting and pasting between lives" (Josselson, 2007: 553) yet helps to retain the methodological integrity to minimize objective evaluations, comparisons and judgements upon the data.

Critical review of the data analysis cycle

Through the continuous process of data analysis (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), data provided by the staff members has "changed ownership" (Josselson, 2007: 548):

"*What was once the participant's story now becomes a co-constructed text, the analysis of which falls within the framework of the interpretive authority of the researcher* (Chase, 1996; Smythe & Murray, 2000)." (Josselson, 2007: 548)

The development of a structured Data Analysis cycle or process, was therefore a central stage in the whole research process. It evolved inductively and naturally to respond to the issues raised through the research process at different times, and linked directly to the methodological and philosophical principles which have guided the research as a whole. The process of Data Analysis that was undertaken in this research has been conceptualized into a clear Model which shows the progressive and concurrent stages of inductive analysis- see Figure 18, below.

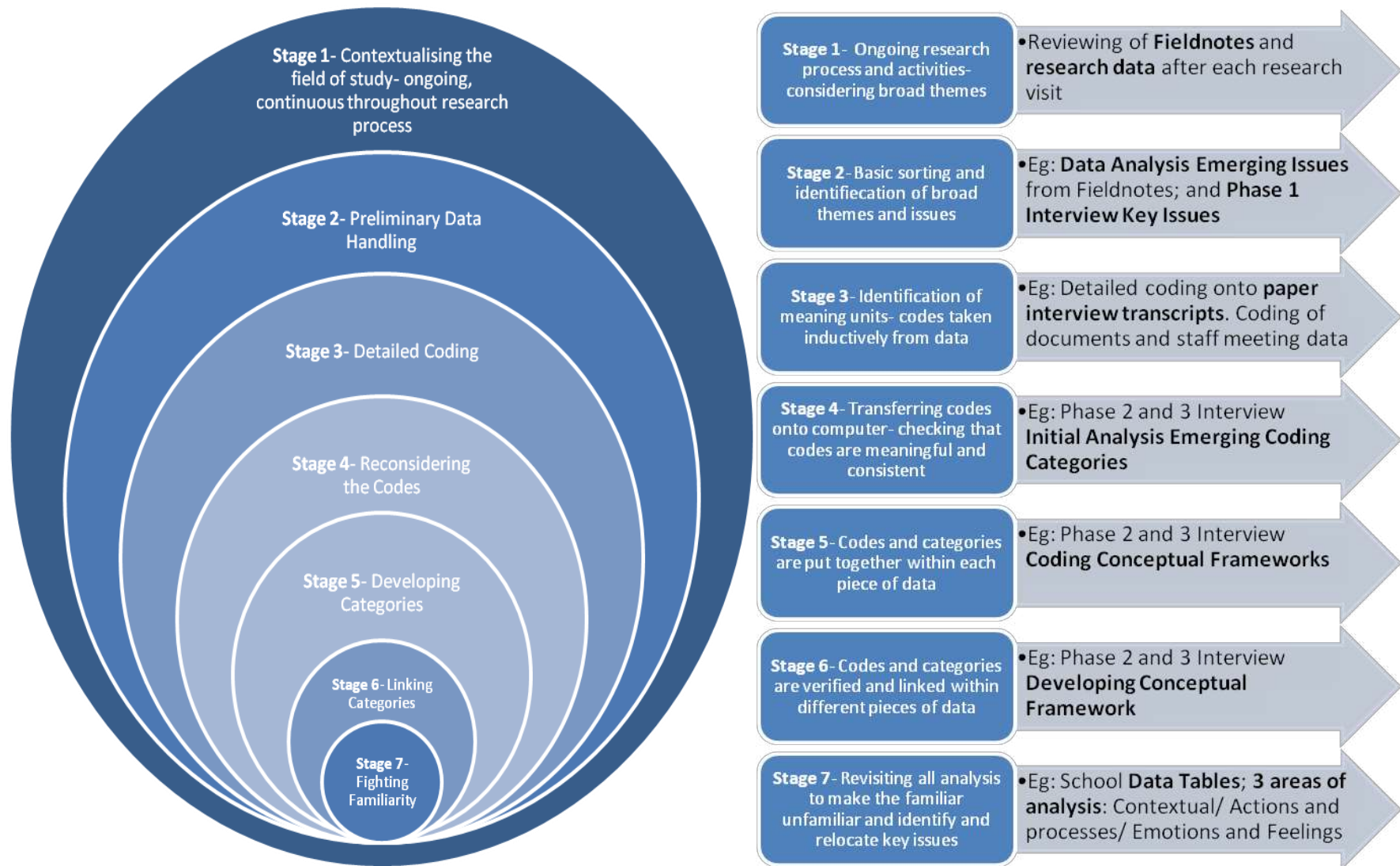


Fig. 18: Data Analysis Model to show progressive and concurrent stages of inductive analysis

The different stages evolved and “emerged” (Ely et al, 1997), as a direct response to the research experience itself and the data produced, and thus whilst key principles were planned from the beginning of the study, there was not a rigid following of one particular approach to analysis to the exclusion of others.

Whilst the process was individually developed to respond to the particular research and approach being undertaken, other key literature has influenced the development of the model, including Creswell’s (2007) Data Analysis Spiral, in which it is acknowledged that:

“to analyse qualitative data the researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach.” (Creswell, J; 2007: 150)

It is this thinking that then evolved into the circular model presented within this study, which demonstrates the inter-relationship between each Stage, with Stage 1 (Contextualising the Field of Study) surrounding the whole process as a continuous and ongoing process, within which all the other processes sit.

Creswell’s (2007) Data Analysis Spiral also provided the idea for clearly setting out the Procedures and Examples of the Data Analysis process. Within the model for this study, this has been further developed to provide further detailed information about the different Stages (indicated within the nested circles); moving on to brief descriptions of the Procedures associated with each Stage (indicated within the Blue boxes); and then moving on to some clear examples of the actual activities which support each stage (indicated within the arrows). (See Appendix 11 for full descriptions of each stage and the related procedures.)

The model presented within this study, also evolved through the use and adaptation of qualitative models of data analysis presented by Miles & Huberman (1994). They outline very clearly their view of qualitative data analysis as:

“consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/ verification.” (Miles & Huberman; 1994: 10)

These three concurrent flows are key within the model of Data Analysis presented here, and particularly central is the notion that all of the stages should be viewed as concurrent, with each impacting upon the other.

The process of data analysis used within this study was not linear, instead being dynamic, with different elements (or Stages) interacting with each other in a holistic and joined up way, through a model which promoted reflection, deep understanding and meaningful identification of significant and relevant themes (see Appendix 12 for a full presentation of the range of data handling and analysis formats that were developed to support each stage of the cycle.)

Chapter 4: Ethics

This research study was underpinned by a central respect for the schools and staff members with whom I worked, the British Educational Research Association's (BERA) notion of the "Ethic of Respect" (BERA, 2004: 6). The focus throughout was on researching "with rather than on" (Doyle, 2007: 85).

At all times, decisions about how to proceed with the research methodology were therefore impacted upon by concerns relating to the feelings, time and pressures facing the staff members involved. In this way, I shared and demonstrated an understanding that:

"Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict." (Stake, 2003: 154)

The study was bound by guiding ethical principles provided by the British Educational Research Association, which state that:

"all educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for:

- The Person
- Knowledge
- Democratic Values
- The Quality of Educational Research
- Academic Freedom" (BERA, 2004: 5)

Initial planning for the research study included detailed thinking about anticipated ethical issues, and these are detailed within the Education Faculty Research Ethics Review (see Appendix 13). However, the BERA Ethical Principles were also incorporated more responsively within the emerging research design through continual critical reflection about issues as they emerged. Thus, the research design reflected the fact that "ethics is not about simplistic solutions. It provides a framework for asking meaningful questions" (Gorman, 2007: 8).

The fieldnote format that was developed and used throughout the research process supported and prompted me to continually reflect upon any key ethical concerns which may impact upon the research at different stages. Notes recorded upon the fieldnotes demonstrated a critical and reflective approach to ensuring that the research was ethically based towards the staff members so as not to cause harm in any unintentional way.

Ethical issues impacted upon the research from the beginning, including decisions about the selection of schools with whom to work. As a result of my other roles working with and for schools in an advisory or consultancy model, and also as a result of my widespread training role within the county, it was acknowledged that this may impact upon how staff members may view me, and influence their expectations of what I wanted to research and how I wanted to work in their schools. I also noted the ethical issues associated with me exploring tensions and the real

life complexity of the situation with staff members who I may at a later stage be involved with professionally through my other roles. Thus it was understood that:

“dual roles may introduce explicit tensions in areas such as confidentiality and must be addressed accordingly” (BERA, 2004: 6).

To address those issues, I gained the support of colleagues to suggest and make introductions for me to two schools with whom I had not worked with before. During the research process, I also asked colleagues to provide advisory support to one of the schools for whom I was asked to work in my Advisory role. This helped to ensure that my established role as researcher within the school, in which I had set up a position where I was trying not to be perceived as ‘the expert’, was not undermined by me entering the school to advise them on a particular issue of school development.

A particular focus for me throughout was the tension apparent in sustaining the non-judgemental position to the research, which I felt was important in terms of the ethical implications for the staff members with whom I was working. Fieldnotes reflect the continuing reflection about this tension:

“Continuing to reflect upon the difficulty of commenting upon the environment or attitudes without being critical or judgemental- this is currently a real issue for me.” (N1; 17.9.07)

“Part of me is still finding it difficult to fully adopt a researcher approach when I’m in the school- I am resisting being critical of any practices, and am finding it difficult to analyse and reflect upon practices without being CRITICAL of them.” (N2: 30.10.07)

Other key elements of BERA’s “Ethic of Respect” (BERA, 2004: 6) were also emphasized, including:

- “Voluntary Informed Consent
- Deception
- Right to Withdraw
- Detriment arising from participation in research
- Privacy” (BERA, 2004: 6- 10)

The notion of voluntary informed consent was central to my underlying principles regarding the relationships that I wanted to develop with the staff members. Whilst this was important, it was recognized that “meaningful application” (Christians, 2003: 217) was difficult to always achieve and sustain. It was important to this research however that staff members did not feel forced to participate, through the direction of their headteacher, the original gate-keeper for the research project. Whilst initial consent to undertake the research was therefore sought and provided by the headteachers, as ‘gate-keepers’ of the particular school setting, notions of “process consent” (Smythe & Murray, 2005: 177) informed the development of a process whereby individual staff members and groups of staff (eg during the staff meetings) were

reminded of the focus of the research and provided with the opportunity to give informed consent and to withdraw from the research if they wanted to. Throughout the research it was therefore emphasized that staff members should volunteer themselves to take part in the research in a way that was comfortable and appropriate to them. At times this led me to question the role of myself as researcher within the process, reflecting upon whether I should be more direct with the research process:

“The HT introduced me to everyone- said that I would be popping in and out of classrooms to see what was going on: I immediately emphasised to all staff that this would be if it was OK with them- that they could send me away if it was not convenient: does this fit the researcher role? Am I being too empathetic towards their needs/ rather than my own as researcher?” (N2: 30.10.07)

Reflecting back upon the overall research approach taken, I find that this approach was appropriate. It enabled me to gain access to a range of sensitive information which supported my deeper understanding of the complex and contradictory issues impacting upon the development of inclusive practices than perhaps I may have had if staff members had been forced in any way to engage with me. Staff members chose to give up their time to talk to me, and I was continuously aware of the need to ensure that the time that they gave up was as valuable to them as it was to me:

“Still anxious not to overload staff- particularly after hearing how difficult things have been emotionally for staff over the last few weeks.” (N3: 6.12.07)

“Trying desperately not to get in the way of the day to day workings of the school- especially when everyone is clearly so busy- I am just so impressed and grateful that *they are willing to grant me any time!!*” (N7: 3.7.08)

Whilst the principles of voluntary informed consent were therefore important to me and central within the research study, yet the complexity of such a notion is not underestimated. It is acknowledged that due to the evolving nature of the research approach that I chose to use, the original research principles and approach that the gate-keepers (headteachers) agreed to was not exactly what happened by the end. The use of ‘process consent’ helped to alleviate the problematic nature of this issue slightly, although there is understanding that even so, the idea of informed consent was often “oxymoronic”:

“*I don’t think we can fully inform a participant at the outset about what he or she is in fact consenting to since much of what will take place is unforeseeable. Thus, consent has to be construed as an aspect of a relational process, deriving from an ethics of care rather than rights (Gilligan, 1982).*” (Josselson, 2007, p540)

Ethical issues relating to the research tools used were identified and reflected upon throughout the research process. Thus, privacy was assured for both the individual staff members and the schools themselves, as no data was included which disclosed personal information, including names, the name of the school or the locality of the school. During the use of observation

throughout the school setting, anonymity was ensured. No pupil names were recorded, and little, other than contextual maps of the classroom layout and class profile of boys/ girls, was written down in order to ensure anonymity and confidentiality for all pupils.

Ethical issues were also particularly important in the development of the interview/ learning conversation process. In addition to the underlying need to ensure anonymity, confidentiality, informed consent and right to withdraw from the research, further issues as a result of the particular approach to interviewing arose. In particular this was linked to the linking of interviews with conversations. As Hitchcock & Hughes (1995) note there is a “fuzzy overlap” between interviews and conversations when the researcher is engaging in in-depth, rich research through ethnographic approaches:

“Interviewing that is like a conversation highlights practical and ethical issues about what is for, on, or off the record.” (Pole & Morrison, 2003: 35)

At times this became an issue during the course of the research, with staff members participating in agreed recorded learning conversations, and then, once the tape was switched off, voluntarily returning to issues raised during the learning conversation to add details or problematise the issues further. At such times, consent needed to be continually renegotiated with verbal checks that information disclosed ‘off the tape’ could be used within fieldnotes to add detail and further complexity to the issues discussed.

BERA Ethical guidelines note that it is seen to be “good practice for researchers to debrief participants at the conclusion of the research.” (BERA, 2004: 10). This occurred naturally within this research study as a key principle underpinning the overall research approach. During Phase 3 of the research, “respondent validation” (Goodson & Sikes, 2001) was therefore encouraged in order to support the meaning making and interpretation stages of the research.

Chapter 5: Data Presentation

Overview

The key themes presented within the Data Analysis section were completely derived from the data from each school setting itself. There was not an attempt to identify categories or themes from the beginning; rather, the themes were grounded in the data, and were identified through a rigorous and cyclical pattern of ongoing data analysis conducted throughout the research period.

Direct comparisons between the two case study schools were not sought. Rather, it was important to present the particular key issues identified by the schools themselves. Whilst many similar themes have been identified by each school setting, the interpretation of the themes differs to reflect the contextual factors impacting upon the individual school.

For each school, data is presented relating to:

1. The context of the school: Introducing the School
2. The actions and processes involved in developing inclusive practices
3. The emotions, feelings and beliefs associated with the experience of developing inclusive practices

School N: Context

Number of pupils on roll:	231
Age range of the school:	7- 11
Number of teaching staff:	11 class teachers Headteacher Deputy Headteacher
Number of support staff:	11 Teaching Assistants 1 part time Family Liaison Officer
% of pupils with SEN: - % at School Action - % at School Action Plus - % with a Statement of SEN	37.2% 22% 13.4% 1.7%
% of pupils with EAL:	23%
% of pupils receiving Free School Meals:	19.5%
% of pupils attaining Level 4 at end of KS2: - English - Maths - Science	74.7% 70.5% 81.7%
% transferring to Grammar School at end of Year 6:	15%
Attendance Levels:	94.7%
Number of fixed term exclusions- academic year 2007- 2008	18- some children had more than 1
% pupil mobility:	28.2%

Fig. 19: School N Contextual Factors 2008- 2009

School N is an urban average sized junior school with two classes per year group, and an additional class for pupils with higher special educational needs: most of these pupils have a Statement of SEN, or are placed at School Action Plus on the SEN Register. There is a separate infant school, which is the main feeder to the school, located on the same road. During the research period, the school was inspected by OFSTED (June 2008). The OFSTED report has therefore been available as another source of contextual detail.

The report recognised significant pockets of deprivation in the school's catchment area, and staff acknowledge that: "the local catchment is very mixed- *we've got the army, the low cost rental, housing association, privately owned housing*" [headteacher]

As a result of the mixed catchment area and the pockets of deprivation, the school has a number of children who may be classed within different vulnerable groups. The OFSTED report

indicates that the number of pupils placed upon the SEN register within the school is well above the national average.

OFSTED also identified that a significant number of the children have additional social problems, and staff recognize that in order to be able to meet the needs of their pupils fully, it is important that they are aware of possible external social and emotional difficulties that the children may be experiencing: “what is really significant for our children is the home backgrounds” [SENCO]. In response to this, the school has developed a Social Needs Register, to collate and share relevant information about external, social factors which may be affecting the child’s ability to make progress and access the learning environment effectively. Currently 33% of the school population is included within the Social Needs Register, and these children are described as having “really significant home issues” [SENCO].

Over the years, the school has had to respond to an increase in pupils displaying challenging behaviour. Staff within the school are flexible in their approach to meeting the needs of children with high levels of behaviour and emotional needs. In particular, this is evidenced through the use of part-time education placements within the school; in the proactive planning and collaboration with a range of outside agencies and in the setting up of specific provisions and resources- such as the Sunshine Room to respond to the identified need. As a result of the proactive and flexible approaches that the school has developed over recent years, the recent OFSTED Report found that the school meets the challenging needs of its pupils well.

Figures within the school (represented within the OFSTED Report) show that whilst most pupils come from White British family backgrounds, nearly a fifth are of Asian descent. The proportion of pupils who have English as an Additional Language is above the national average. Staff report that this is a positive aspect of the school as a whole, which adds to the diversity: “I would say that the character of the school is quite often driven by the groups that the children represent so we have a very large group of Nepalese children, so the teachers are very good at trying to include other cultures in what they do, so that is significant as well.” [SENCO.]

A positive focus on this diversity was apparent throughout the school, in the interactions between pupils and peers and pupils and teachers; in the focus of some teaching content; and in visual displays in classrooms and on corridor display boards. Staff are proud of the diversity within the school, and believe that parents “pick us for our multi-cultural background.” [headteacher]

Staff acknowledge that within the school context staff turnover has been high, with many teachers relatively new to teaching. This is seen as a challenge within the school, and something that has impacted upon possibilities for growth and whole school development or improvement: “A significant factor has been that we have had very large turnover of staff, many teachers are young and inexperienced and only been here for a short while.” [SENCO]

Staff talk openly about the daily challenges that they face. This is usually expressed in a positive way, with staff reflecting upon the significant needs of the children, which often change on a day to day basis as a result of emotional and social issues from within the home context. Most staff articulated that they were aware of the challenging context of the school and local catchment area before they applied for their job, and that this was a particular reason for choosing the school: “I knew that it was a different sort of catchment to the school that I was in. *I realized that there were going to be more challenging problems here.... But I was looking forward to getting my teeth into it.*” [SENCO]

Staff indicated that you would have to be a particular type of teacher to enjoy working in such a challenging school, and that for some previous members of staff, this school clearly had not suited their particular skills and experiences: “*I don’t think you could stay here if you didn’t like your job.*” [class teacher]

There are times, however, when staff express how difficult it can be to sustain the energy required to support such challenging needs on a day to day basis. The school was seen to be an “exhausting place to work” [SENCO]

Another key challenge for staff, is the high levels of pupil mobility: “I expected a lot of mobility around the army families. But actually most mobility is due to poor parenting and family backgrounds.” [headteacher]

Staff expressed frustration in relation to this high level of pupil mobility. In particular it was noted that often “high levels of support, time and energy” [headteacher] are put in for a particular child, and then they leave and move to another school without warning. Staff talked about the finite-ness of resources and how difficult it could be when resources were utilized to support the needs of a particular child, and then, once the child was starting to respond to the support, they would often leave the school leaving staff frustrated at not being able to reap the benefits of the high levels of support and resourcing that they had prioritized for the child.

Staff expressed concern that when pupils with high levels of need demanded additional resources, this would impact upon the resources available to other pupils, because the available resources are finite. Staff explained that prioritizing resources to support one child would have an incidental benefit to other children in terms of their learning not being so disrupted.

However, when the pupil then moved away from the school staff then started to question how well the resources had been shared, and the benefit of the inclusive systems for all pupils.

Staff talk about the importance of the school being viewed as a community school and that ownership of it should be shared between the parents and staff members. They acknowledge the need to work closely with the parents, although this again is seen as somewhat of a challenge: “one of the problems is getting parents involved and engaged. Trying to actually get parents in, that is difficult.” [headteacher] The newly appointed Family Liaison Officer (FLO) is therefore seen by staff as central to developments made in this area: “our FLO is doing an amazing job because now the communication is even better between parents and us, which makes it even more effective.” [SENCO]

Staff talk about “our school”- indicating both a personal commitment (rather than the more formal and distancing- ‘the school’) and also a commitment to shared ownership particularly with parents and the wider community. The staff have a clear Vision Statement for the school, which was developed through a staff INSET opportunity, and which reflects the key aspects of education which are emphasized and valued within the school community:

“At N. we work as a team- children, parents, staff and the community; to motivate, encourage and celebrate the development and achievements of everyone. Through active involvement in school life, we encourage children to become responsible, independent learners, preparing them with valuable life skills that enable them to become life long learners.”

During the focus staff meeting (October 2008, see Appendix 14) staff discussed their shared vision for Inclusion within the school context. Similar issues were highlighted, with the staff agreeing on the following shared statement:

“At N, all members of our working community are committed to providing a learning environment appropriate to all children’s academic, emotional and social needs.”

School N: Actions and processes involved in developing inclusive practices:

The Learning Environment

From the start, the learning environment was emphasized as key to the school's inclusive approach by staff members, reflected in early fieldnotes:

“she is very proud of the current learning environment: one of the first key points that she emphasized and discussed with me:

‘Six years ago, there was peeling paint on the walls, old wooden desks and bare floors’ the previous HT spent a considerable amount of time and money redecorating the school- ‘the learning environment is vastly improved’- now all the classrooms have interactive whiteboards, there are carpets and new desks in the classrooms, and the rooms have been painted.” [Fieldnote]

Comparisons are made with how the learning environment used to be: the “previous headteachers spent a lot of money on trying to create a nicer environment, a fresher, a brighter approach for the children.” [business manager]

Staff identified the significance of the learning environment upon all members of the school community: staff, pupils and parents. It was noted that improvements in the learning environment had not only impacted upon practical resources, but also upon how everyone felt about their learning environment. The linking of a concrete environment with the more emotional and nurturing aspects of establishing pride in the environment was therefore emphasised: “*I think the learning environment's very important because we've tried very very hard to make the school very welcoming and not just for the parents, the children, and sort of like the building that we've done, it's just to make people proud that this is their school, you know, they want to come here.*” [headteacher]

It was acknowledged that whilst this development clearly helped pupils to respond more positively to the experiences offered within school, they were more engaged and excited by the stimulating learning environment, it was also an important factor in staff morale. Thus it was recognized that the learning environment impacts upon the ability of all to enjoy and succeed within the setting, including helping staff to cope with the challenges of the individual school context: “*We've done a lot of work on the learning environment haven't we and trying to make it better for, not just better for the children but for the staff as well*” [headteacher]

Supporting children and meeting pupil needs

Staff discussed a range of innovative strategies and systems that the school has developed to flexibly support the needs of all pupils. Whilst a range of different systems and approaches were discussed in passing- “*We try to make sure that all children's needs are met, be they social*

needs, needs with their friends so we have friendship stops, we have peer mediators, we have prefects, we have sports leaders” [SENCO] it was noticeable that most attention was focused upon very specific and individualized strategies and systems in place to support the challenging behaviour and emotional needs of some individual pupils. Within discussions, there was limited mention specifically about meeting children’s learning needs, although this is possibly because of the impact of ability setting which is discussed separately below.

During the research, a new system was introduced: the Sunshine Room, and a significant amount of attention was placed upon this new provision within the staff discussions. The Sunshine Room is intended to support children, particularly with behavioural and emotional needs, to be able to enter and appropriately access the school setting. Trained staff supervise the provision, which children were sent to, if they were not able to cope within their usual classroom context. Opportunities are provided for the children to have calming down time, to talk about their emotional needs, and also to complete class based work tasks with the support of 1:1 attention, away from the hustle and bustle of the classroom environment: *“If children don’t feel right or they need to say something, they don’t have to sit in the classroom and struggle.”* [business manager]

A lot of emphasis within the discussions about the new Sunshine Room and supporting key children with emotional and behavioural difficulties was upon the need to provide the pupils with basic nurturing.

Staff acknowledged that it had been set up to support the teaching staff and lower the impact of challenging children on the rest of the children within the class and school, and recognized that it was then up to the teachers and support staff to appropriately use the systems and follow through on strategies. There are: *“all these things in place, and you’ve just got to make sure, you know, that we use them and send the children, you know to those places that are there to help us ultimately.”* [class teacher]

The Sunshine Room was generally seen as a positive development: it *“will actually pay us dividends”* [business manager], although for some staff it provoked further philosophical reflection about how a withdrawn ‘exclusive’ provision could fit in with their own values and beliefs about an inclusive school environment:

“I would think of the Sunshine Room as being more associated with the behaviour aspect of inclusion rather than the ability aspect of inclusion. It’s a way of enabling people to continue to be here with us when they have to be, when there’s no option for the school. It enables them to continue to come and work in this environment, without causing what can be the catastrophic destruction of a lesson” [class teacher]

This teacher started to question and articulate some of the difficulties that he experienced around differences in 'inclusion': what he terms '*behaviour rather than ability inclusion*'. Other staff demonstrated awareness of some of the possible limitations of the approach. They reflect upon the fact that it will not work for everyone, and of the need to therefore continually monitor impact: "The Sunshine Room was trashed last Thursday, to the point where the teaching assistants were watching her rip the place to pieces." [class teacher] and "*I think there's a danger of the sunshine room going the other way, some children will really enjoy going there and they will use it in that way, and they will take the mickey out of the situation.*" [class teacher]

The Sunshine Room was clearly an innovative and specialized provision which had been set up within the school context to help staff and the school as a whole to respond to the complex and challenging needs of some of the pupils.

Staff considered this to be a good example of an inclusive system, a system which enabled some of the more challenging children to actually be included: ie to not be excluded from the school environment.

However, staff were still aware of some of the issues, and were questioning whether pupils that required the provision actually were being 'included', eg participating and accessing the full mainstream curriculum and provision on offer within the school.

This issue of whether inclusion should be seen as the opposite of exclusion is critical. Just because a provision or strategy is enabling the pupil to not be excluded, does not necessarily mean that it is enabling the child to be included as fully as possible.

Grouping children by ability

It had not been anticipated that this research study would focus upon issues relating to the grouping of children by ability and within specialized nurture classes. However, it emerged as a very significant factor within the research, which staff felt contributed to the development of inclusive practices within their school setting, commented upon spontaneously by most members of staff. From the outset staff explained that: "The children are set by ability within year groups for maths and literacy from Year 3." [Fieldnote]

Comments from the staff suggest some differences in how the setting works for them as teachers. Most staff were aware of the issues related to setting, and were able to express that the use of setting was perhaps "controversial", and that "there are pros and cons, for and against." [class teacher]

Teachers acknowledged that setting children by ability did make the job of differentiating effectively to meet the varying needs of children within a class group easier: "in terms of trying

to organize and plan, it's easier... in my class I have, you know, children who are level one up to level five so the thought of trying to plan the literacy lesson with that range, well you could do it, but it seems quite daunting, whereas if I've only in my set got children who are say three sub levels apart then obviously that makes it easier." [class teacher]

However, other issues relating to ability setting were also identified, leading staff to start to question some of the accepted practices current within the school: "I mean, I suppose if children who are level one were exposed to some of the level five writers they would say develop more, I *don't know*." [class teacher]

Discussions about how effective differentiation practices are, or could be, demonstrated staff members feelings towards coping with the very wide range of ability levels within their mainstream classes: "*In this country there's such a big thing on differentiation, you must differentiate, and quite honestly I feel, and I know some of the other teachers do, that for certain things, and there are certain times where you just can't do that, it's not appropriate to do that.*" [class teacher]

Staff discussed their understanding of children's perceptions towards the setting system, and suggested that there is a "distinct divide" between pupils' perceptions and the impact that it has upon their self esteem: "*There's a distinct divide between the children who actually like the fact that we do work in sets... oh we like being in the bottom set because it is comforting and we get support, and children who find it, I'm in the lower set I want to be up in the next set, I don't like being down here... Some find it comforting, some find it insulting.*" [class teacher]

One staff member particularly focused her discussions upon what she believed were the inclusive aspects of ability setting, linking her experiences as a teacher with previous childhood school experiences. Key issues central to the concept of inclusion, relating to the need to remove barriers to participation, access and achievement are explored, and the teacher summarises that for some pupils those barriers can only be removed if they are included within an appropriate ability set:

"I think if you're trying to make a child feel included, if they're not in an ability set, I can think of my own experience of being in school, when suddenly bright kids can do it all and you feel awful because, and you're not part of that lesson because you can't engage with it." [class teacher]

Unprompted, this staff member automatically started to link the issues around ability setting with the emotional memories that she had had of learning as a child.

In addition to issues relating to making differentiation more effective and accessible to enable all pupils to participate and achieve, staff members expressed a feeling that working with pupils in the lower ability sets was more difficult. Although resentment by teachers towards working with the lower sets, or towards those teachers who had the higher ability sets, was not overt, it could potentially become an issue:

“I do feel a bit sorry for the other two because they get to keep the bottom set and the middle set between them.” [class teacher]

“Last year, when we set the class, I had three bottom sets... we don’t anymore because I lost the will to live. So we don’t anymore and we’ve kind of shared the sets down.” [class teacher]

“The morning’s my reprieve, it’s nice- I’ve got top set.” [class teacher]

“I actually get children who are actually behaving at year six level which is nice in one of my subjects.” [class teacher]

Staff members expressed how difficult it is to always work with the lower ability sets and that this may impact upon the development of meaningful inclusive practices within the school. It is possible that feelings, including “losing the will to live” may influence both staff morale, and pupil self esteem, and that this may then impact upon how fully all pupils are being enabled to be included. Many staff members expressed that this was a system that had been in operation for some time within the particular school context: the pupils “get used to it and just accept it. *They’ve never done any different. This is how it works*” [class teacher]

Within this school context, ability setting is seen as an inclusive strategy to enable effective differentiation and to ensure that teaching and learning can be accessed by all pupils. Ability setting is therefore considered to be a strategy to remove barriers to participation, access and achievement. However, it is also a strategy which can be seen as being exclusionary. As voiced by staff members, pupils are being ‘excluded’ from opportunities to make progress through experiencing higher learning activities, and being supported by higher ability peers. Those more able pupils could also benefit from an inclusive mixed ability approach to teaching and learning, by having the opportunity to generalize learning by explaining it and modeling it to other peers. Staff discussion also considered whether the strategy of ability setting is modeling ‘inclusive practices’ throughout the school as a whole. There were clearly some members of staff who felt themselves to be ‘excluded’, or felt that other members of staff were having a “more difficult time” or being ‘excluded’ by having to work with the lower ability sets.

Feelings towards the Year 3- 4 nurture class were overwhelmingly positive in the way they were expressed by staff. The nurture class was therefore described as: “a god send” [headteacher] and

“one of the most enjoyable classes to work with: ‘supply teachers asking to work with that class group’.” [fieldnote] Huge pride in the success of the provision for providing an enabling and inclusive environment for children with challenging needs was demonstrated during discussions: *“We talked about [the nurture] class [to OFSTED] because we really feel that it’s excellent, and the children are making quite good progress.”* [SENCO]

Staff discussed how such a provision could support the inclusive practices that they were developing within the school. In particular, notions of ‘educating’ and ‘containing’ were explored, with the belief that the differentiated class provision gave key pupils the opportunity to receive and participate in a full and relevant education:

“Before we had this main room we were containing, and that’s not the same as giving them an education.” [headteacher]

Other members of staff considered who was being included through the use of the differentiated class provision. It was noted that this provision, different from the Sunshine Room discussed earlier, provided an inclusive environment for those pupils with extreme and complex learning needs, rather than the behavioural and emotional needs: *“that class operates to like cope with if you like the ability associated inclusion sector of our school environment.”* [class teacher]

Inclusion and inclusive practices were therefore categorized, with the impression given that pupils with different types of need required different forms of ‘inclusive practices’. For some, the nurture class provision was seen to be effective in enabling the pupil to be successfully included in the future. Thus, whilst the nurture class could be seen as an exclusionary, different provision, staff could recognize the benefits for the pupil, both in the immediate (to enable some progression of learning skills, and possibly to prevent exclusion) and also for the future: *“It’s to allow inclusion for the future, isn’t it, that’s why we have it.”* [deputy head]

The teacher in charge of the nurture class discussed perceptions towards his class around the school. From the pupils’ perspective, he believed that there were no problems with how the children both within his class, and in the other classes viewed the class and children in it. He also stated that the children within the class generally understood their needs and realized that they required the more supportive environment available within the nurture class: *“I’ve heard the children in this class say, these aren’t their words, but that it’s a lower ability class.... It’s kind of the same work that’s easier for us.”* [class teacher]

Pupils therefore seem to have a clear perception of the fact that they are in a “lower ability class” and it is important to reflect upon how each individual reacts and responds to that daily message.

During the year, the class seems to have helped to change staff perceptions about the difficulties and challenges presented by some of the pupils with more extreme and complex learning needs. Thus, now the differentiated class is the one that supply teachers want to teach in. Staff also reflect that “having these children with these needs grouped in here has really helped all the other teachers.” [class teacher] Staff members found that it made their teaching role easier, as it eased the differentiation needed to respond to all pupils learning needs within a particular year cohort. Thus: “not only do we have three sets, but one of my children goes out for the special 3,4,5 class out there. He joins them for literacy and numeracy, because even the less able sets in Year 6, he can’t access that level of work.” [class teacher]

Staff members focused on the progress and achievements that pupils within the nurture class were making, using this as evidence for the effectiveness of the approach within their particular school setting: “He’s now got seven of those children who were in his class for maths are now going into the other classrooms for their maths lessons, which is a tremendous, it really is actually a tremendous achievement to have that.” [headteacher]

Whilst staff within the school generally believed that the differentiated class provision was enabling pupils to be more fully and effectively included within the whole school, there was some awareness of the extreme measure that this provision suggested, and how this may be viewed negatively by people not fully aware of the provision and how it was being used: “The only thing I wondered was if an inspector kind of misunderstood or just wouldn’t see the reality of our school.... But I felt confident that we could justify what we were doing.” [SENCO]

Leadership

Leadership emerged as a significant theme from an early stage in the research process, as recorded within reflections on analysis in early fieldnotes:

“The importance of the ‘team’ and less dictatorial styles of leadership is certainly emerging- and this will be interesting to explore as HT has come in fairly recently with a different style of leading the school.” [fieldnote]

It is significant that nearly all members of staff made reference to this issue quite naturally during the discussions: some directly mentioning leadership approaches, others more indirectly talking about communication and change which has come from the overall leadership approach used. Many members of staff made references and comparisons between previous and present forms of leadership approach. Key staff members in leadership positions within the school were very aware of the need to set up a supportive and collaborative leadership and team approach within the school: “There was a lot of suspicion about what I as head would do when I came in

because they had had a very dictatorial head... there was not a lot of co-operation, they were used to being told what to do.” [headteacher]

It was noted that the previous headteacher: “had to be really brisk and efficient, and it was all quite strict. Whereas our new head, I think has benefited from all of those quite severe changes, and now she is able to go with a really welcoming approach” [SENCO]. The previous headteacher was described as: “almost militant with her approach in the school” [class teacher]. Contrasting with this, staff members focused upon the development of a new form of leadership approach and structure within the school. This new approach focused upon the importance of forms of distributed leadership, involving the “giving out of responsibilities, and the sharing of leadership” [headteacher]. Personal choices, values and characteristics impacted upon this decision, and are central in the application of particular leadership styles: “I like working with people I don’t necessarily like leading from the top... I feel that I would prefer the school to be a unit working together.” [headteacher]

Although generally this approach was seen as positive, there were some feelings that the leadership style and approach should be more focused and direct:

“she came in almost as a friend.... When she first came in she really should have come in with that kind of attitude that I’m the boss and you’re the teachers and therefore you do as I say, rather than I’m going to be your friend.” [class teacher].

The need to develop effective communication systems as part of the leadership approach also emerged through the data, highlighting the importance of this to practitioners working within challenging and inclusive contexts:

“I didn’t even know he was coming, I walked into my room and there was this new boy sitting there.” [class teacher]

Leadership style, including the sharing out of decision making processes, the delegation of leadership responsibilities, the development of a team approach and effective communication are key within the development of inclusive school contexts. Indeed, when aspects of these processes are missing, or not working fully effectively, it is clear that staff experience frustration which can impact upon their ability to cope effectively with the challenges of developing effective inclusive practices.

Teamwork

Linked very closely to the discussions about leadership within this school context, were issues around teamwork and the importance of ‘the team’. This perhaps emerged as a significant issue

throughout discussions with different members of staff, because of the relatively new school structure, and change in leadership.

Indeed, as the headteacher noted, it was not initially presumed to be a key priority: “This was *another angle that I didn’t really anticipate when I came here*” [headteacher], but soon emerged as a significant factor impacting upon the school as a whole. In particular, links were made by many staff members between the historical high staff turnover within the school, and feelings of staff being ‘unsupported’ with the lack of a ‘team’ approach: “she, and others, left because they felt unsupported”. [class teacher]

This is significant for the school, and a difficult area to fully address. The school was caught in a vicious cycle: high staff turnover made it difficult to build and establish a fully effective ‘team approach’; and the lack of a team approach, with staff members feeling unsupported, directly led to the high levels of staff turnover. Thus, it is noted by senior leaders that: “We have lost a lot of valuable teachers over the years- other than J, the longest standing teacher has been here for 2 years- so that shows the kind of turnover that we have had.” [headteacher]

Staff also acknowledge that this level of staff turnover has an impact upon the pupils, and the ability for them to receive a consistent educational experience. It is seen that this is particularly significant in this school, where so many of the pupils require stable boundaries and experiences. By not being able to provide that due to the high levels of staff turnover, the school is unintentionally providing an environment which may exacerbate some of the behavioural and emotional difficulties that are causing the challenges and leading to high levels of staff turnover. The complexity of the issue is acknowledged by staff:

“[The HT] desperately wants to keep our team together. The trouble is, we invest in them, we send them off on training, we have specialist teachers coming in and training us. So we invest in our team of staff and it’s been a pattern here over a number of years that people keep leaving. So we can see that as a high priority to try and keep the staff.”
[SENCO]

As a result of the complexity of the issue of high staff turnover and the need to effectively establish and build a supportive team approach within the school, the headteacher found that this emerged as a key priority: “*When I came into the school... we also had a situation where, for various reasons staff turnover was huge. There was a great divide between senior management and other staff, so needed to try to focus on building teamwork within staff.*” [headteacher]

It is acknowledged by staff that this will take some time to achieve, but that progress is being made: “*it’s slowly turning around but it’s not quite there yet*” [headteacher]; “*We’ve got a good*

team now, and hopefully we can build on that” [headteacher]. It is considered that there is: “less chance that teachers will move on now with [the] new head” [SENCO]

Staff emphasise two important elements in building an effective team approach within the school. The first element relates to the need for staff to feel supported, and to be able to support each other when facing challenges within the school: “*in this particular environment it’s more of a sort of hunkering down to, you know, sort of like, together we’ll, we can sort of get through it approach*” [class teacher] and: “the staff are really supportive and we all get on well as a team” [class teacher]

The second element relates to the need for the staff to bond and develop personal and social relationships with each other. This is again seen as key to supporting staff to be able to cope with the challenges of the particular school context: “*what’s really good is that they all go out and socialise together. I think it’s really good that they do that, they’ve bonded together, and in the staffroom the atmosphere is really light and everyone is laughing and joking. You have got to have that.*” [SENCO]

The value that staff placed upon the development of a team approach was also emphasized within the planned staff meeting (October 2008, see Appendix 14). During this meeting factors which support the development of inclusive practices were explored and issues relating directly to the development of a supportive and positive team were overwhelmingly emphasized. Thus, out of the 10 individual responses, only two were not grouped by staff within the broad ‘teamwork’ category. Responses linked to the ‘teamwork’ category included:

- Colleagues who are always supportive- listen and advise
- Support network in school
- Positive attitudes in the working environment
- All staff working together- single focus

Within this school context, issues relating to ‘the team’ have been emphasized and are seen as significant. They directly impact upon staff members’ abilities to develop inclusive practices, and to respond to the challenges presented within the school context. The issues are complex and directly impact on each other: the high staff turnover being a contributory factor in the lack of an established and supportive team; and the lack of an established and supportive team being a contributory factor in high staff turnover. The issue, within this school context is seen as particularly significant as a result of the recent changes in leadership within the school; the number of new members of staff; and the challenging nature of the pupils and context with which staff are having to cope on a day to day basis.

School N: Emotions, feelings and beliefs associated with the experience of developing inclusive practices

Language Used

The extreme and often contradictory language used to talk about the experience of working within the school was significant. Generally, staff within the same conversation would use a range of very emotive language to describe and explain their experiences of developing inclusive practices within the particular school setting. Often individual staff used both positive and negative language to describe the experience within the same discussion. It was not, therefore, that some members of staff had positive feelings towards the school setting, and others had negative feelings. Rather, the contrasting language used and emotions felt seems to reflect the complex situation of the school. There did not seem to be a comfortable 'middle ground', experiences were not described as 'nice'. Rather the experiences and practical realities provoked emotions at extreme ends of the spectrum- from 'horrendous' to 'amazing'.

Staff acknowledge the difficulties associated with working in a challenging school context, and emphasise how exhausting it can be, especially when having to manage significant disruptive behaviour within the classroom. This aspect is seen to lead to intense emotions from staff members, and, as the headteacher notes, even causes some rifts between the leadership team and other members of staff: *"I think that's really hard on the staff, these children who are really really demanding, and there's just nowhere to go with them... I think that's what the staff find the most frustrating, I think they must get really frustrated with me because there are only certain things, there are only certain ways that I can go"* [headteacher]

Staff openly discuss how difficult they found the school environment to work in when they first started at the school, as a result of the range and diversity of challenging needs presented by the pupils and their families: *"At first I dreaded coming into school... The first term was horrendous, just in terms of getting to grips with all the different children, all the different needs, and working out how best to tackle each child"* [class teacher]; *"I came here and hated it with a passion... It was a real shock, a real shock!"* [class teacher]; *"It got to the point where I was really unable to cope"* [class teacher].

At times quite extreme examples of language are used to convey the difficulties and challenges that the staff experience on a day to day basis within the school context. This includes language such as:

- "horrendous" [class teacher]
- "I lost the will to live" [class teacher]
- "catastrophic destruction of a lesson" [class teacher]
- "like a living nightmare" [class teacher]
- "soul destroying" [headteacher]

It must be noted again that these comments are not made by one or two members of staff within the school, but are representative of the emotions expressed by many within the school. Extreme emotional experiences are described, yet the staff members remain at the school. Senior leaders demonstrate that they are aware of the impact in terms of emotional exhaustion that such extreme experiences can have upon staff, and recognize that this is very different to the experience that many teachers in other schools have: “the staff are exhausted by the end of the day, by the end of the week, and in many schools where a lot of staff would, you know, after school would be doing this and that, ours are just drained” [headteacher]

Despite the feelings expressed above, and the challenging nature of the school, staff acknowledge the mixed emotions that working in such an environment provokes: “*Actually it’s very extremes, there’s probably no middle ground, we cope really well or think that was a complete disaster, one of the two extremes probably*” [class teacher]. Staff also talk about their opposing feelings towards the school, at times dreading working within there, but also deeply valuing the experiences that it offers: “*It certainly has been a challenge... but very rewarding as well- I look forward to coming to school*” [headteacher]

Other staff members talk about how working in the school has been “horrendous [but that] *it’s been a huge huge learning curve, I wouldn’t change it for the world*” [class teacher]; and that, whilst “*I initially dreaded coming into school.... I’ve found it immensely satisfying*” [class teacher]

Linked to these emotional responses is a clear feeling from many staff members that they are there because they want to make a difference to the lives of the pupils that they teach. This is seen as: “the bonus of the job that you do have a feeling, a sense, however intangible it is at the time, that you are making small, even if it is just a minute, impact which is pleasing” [class teacher]- although it is noted that at times, this is the “only thing you cling to” [class teacher]

The complexity of emotional extremes demonstrated through conversation with different staff members within the school context is significant, and impacts directly upon how the school moves forward, responding to the diverse and often challenging needs of the pupils and families to build upon inclusive practices. It is noticeable that this level of emotional reaction by staff indicates both high levels of commitment and motivation to work within the school context (indicated by staff feelings of satisfaction and reward) but also that day to day experiences may affect both an individual’s and the whole staffs’ ability to cope with persistent, ongoing challenges (as indicated by the expressions of dread and despair).

Understandings of inclusion

This school identifies that issues around inclusion are “highly significant” [SENCO] and “central to everything” [fieldnote] within the school context.

During the staff meeting discussions (October 2008, see Appendix 14), a range of individual views influenced both by school factors and personal experiences were recorded on the individual questionnaires. When asked to describe what Inclusion means to them as an individual, many staff members emphasized issues around the rights of all pupils to be in a mainstream environment, and to have equality of access and opportunities:

- To allow all children the opportunity to be in mainstream education (Questionnaire 1)
- Everyone being offered the same opportunities (Questionnaire 2)

For others, this ideal was slightly tempered by their own experiences of including complex and challenging pupils. Thus, there was a growing acknowledgement of a need to provide an enabling and supportive education which is appropriate to the particular needs of individual pupils:

- Enabling, supporting every child to achieve their full potential, whatever that may be (Questionnaire 3)
- Every child receiving the education appropriate to their needs as a right (Questionnaire 4)
- Giving everyone the opportunity to learn at a level appropriate to the individual (Questionnaire 6)

Other questionnaire responses reflect the challenging and complex issue of including all pupils all of the time, and very probably reflect the day to day experiences of the particular members of staff:

- If bad behaviour has the potential to affect the work/ well being of others then maybe certain individuals have lost their opportunity to be included (Questionnaire 2)
- It means letting any Tom, Dick or Harry, regardless of their ability or behaviour, remain in mainstream schooling, regardless of the damage they do to the environment and people around them or the learning achieved by their peers (Questionnaire 7)

Whilst most staff members acknowledge the positive aspects of providing an inclusive learning environment for all pupils, the issue of the potential detrimental impact of this policy upon the learning and well being of other pupils is highlighted by some:

- Some children make inclusion impossible as they ruin the learning environment (Questionnaire 2)
- From my experience as a teacher I would question the use of inclusion in some extreme instances due to the impact on the class (Questionnaire 10)

During discussions, staff talk about the range of flexible approaches that they have developed to respond appropriately to individual needs. They acknowledge that, when doing this for some of the pupils with more complex and challenging needs, this will not mean that they are always fully included within a class of peers. Instead, there is a feeling that to be able to include the pupil, different provisions and approaches need to be utilized. Thus: “we try and meet individual

children's needs and to us that doesn't mean that we want every child shut in their classroom for a whole day" [SENCO]

Staff members explain how systems are set up to provide a more inclusive approach to meeting needs- including the use of the nurture class which *"although they're not included in the other mixed ability classes, we feel that that is better for them and therefore more inclusive"* [SENCO]. Similarly, systems where certain pupils are placed on part time programmes, and only attend the school during the morning, are seen to be inclusive because the school is trying during that time to meet their particular needs. Staff members discuss the fact that placement within a mainstream environment may not be inclusive for all pupils, that instead a specialist provision may provide a more inclusive learning experience for an individual with complex or challenging needs: *"We also put a lot of time into putting forward statements and supporting parents to get special school placements because again that meets those children's needs, because we don't necessarily see it as inclusive to have them struggling and unhappy"* [SENCO].

Inclusion is therefore viewed in a very flexible and broad way. Staff are not focused solely on ensuring equality of access and opportunity within their mainstream environment, but instead carefully consider the actual needs of particular individuals and will consider whether specialist provisions, placements or systems may provide the pupil with a more inclusive learning experience. For staff, the issue is not around placement, but about ensuring equal and inclusive access to an equitable learning experience.

Staff members acknowledge the complex nature of trying to provide an inclusive setting with equality of opportunity and support for all pupils all of the time: *"we are an incredibly inclusive environment, or try to be"* [class teacher].

A particular issue in responding inclusively to meet the needs of pupils with challenging and complex needs is seen to be the impact that this has upon other pupils in the school. This emerged as a significant issue for staff members, with many of them introducing this topic. Thus, pupils with high levels of need are seen to *"affect everyone else's learning... and then you think, well am I spending more time on this child because he's got these issues, and not my other children, and then it's not quite fair is it."* [class teacher]

Other staff members echo this sentiment, describing the *"true sadness... that unfortunately the idea of inclusion excludes the majority at times. It sucks resources, financial, manpower, everything, resources, SEN resources, down towards an absolute minority group that in school, even though it's a high percentage in this school, it's still a minority group, and everyone else does, as a result, suffer, however good you try to be"* [class teacher].

The emotional and physical implications of this are identified by staff, who talk about the impact that such an unequal division of resourcing can have upon the ability for other pupils to

make progress, upon staff motivation and exhaustion levels and upon emotional responses to key pupils, where it is identified that: *“if they’re not there, there is an element of relief because you know that everyone else can progress”* [class teacher].

Staff members talk with passion about this issue, and express the fact that: “the silent majority deserve an education, and their rights to an education have been totally annihilated by the behaviour of children in their class” [headteacher]; and talk about the “negative impact on the other children, because support and resources have to be taken from others to provide for one child” [fieldnote]

Issues raised within the staff meeting (October 2008, see Appendix 14) also reflect these sentiments. When asked to consider factors which hinder the development of inclusive practices within their particular school context, whilst a wide range of factors were identified, the behaviour of pupils was seen to be one of the central issues:

- Behaviour of children
- Children who refuse to accept any form of help/ support/ inclusion offered
- No nurture room in the afternoon when children find it harder to cope
- Bad behaviour

As a result of these feelings, some members of staff are led to question the effectiveness of the truly inclusive environment that they are trying to provide: *“I know that some people aren’t as clever as others, but perhaps sometimes we pander to those children. It’s very controversial”* [class teacher]; *“I sort of partly wonder whether I perhaps try too hard to include people in my lessons at times”* [class teacher]; *“we’ve gone so far for individual rights that community rights seem to have been forgotten...what we need to do is come back to somewhere in the middle”* [headteacher].

As before, it must be noted that such sentiments are not just voiced by one or two more negative members of staff: rather this was seen to be a shared view, but that often within the same conversation, staff would also acknowledge the incredibly inclusive environment provided by the school. There are clear indications of mixed emotions and feelings around the complex issue of providing an inclusive educational experience to respond fully to all pupils, without it becoming over-balanced and emphasizing the needs of a ‘minority group’. This is a difficult and complex issue for schools to grapple with. Inclusion emerges as a complex and problematic concept where the extreme needs, and rights, of particular individuals’ impact upon the rights and opportunities of others within the same school setting.

Complex emotional responses such as these by staff members to the issue of providing an inclusive environment to support all pupils need to be acknowledged. Practitioners are unable to move forward in a united way unless they feel that their emotions are understood, and that they are supported to develop a shared approach to dealing with the tensions.

Within the school setting frustration is also expressed in terms of government policy around allocation and devolvement of resources, and the impact that this has upon the ability of the school to develop its inclusive practices. Whilst it is generally acknowledged that inclusive practices have significant benefits, it is felt that these are undermined by a government policy which seeks inclusion without supporting it in terms of realistic ‘standards’ expectations or appropriate levels of resources: “as far as the government are concerned, inclusion is everybody has full time education in a class, and need to make average progress.” [headteacher]

The current system is therefore seen to create exclusion rather than promote inclusion: “the *basic problem with government policy is that inclusion for all is wonderful, but if you don’t have the resourcing in place to give those children the sort of one to one they need, in fact the government is just saying ‘oh that’s inclusion, deal with it’. In fact we’re excluding those children because they’re here for four years, and we said with the first year six that we had, how many of those children were excluded in their first year in secondary school. That’s not inclusion.*” [headteacher] Indeed, rather than providing an inclusive educational environment, current systems are instead considered to be a simple measure for ‘containing’ children, and a way to set them up for future failure.

Throughout the research there were frequent intense periods when staff time was taken up in responding to extreme needs of pupils, and senior leaders expressed their concern that the school was “at breaking point” [fieldnote].

Whilst staff throughout the school therefore showed commitment to inclusive values and were working hard to strive to provide an inclusive environment which met the learning, emotional and behavioural needs of the pupils, it was acknowledged that: “as a sort of chalk face reality that sort of level of inclusion has a negative impact on the environment.” [class teacher]

Ways of talking about the pupils

Within this school, staff talked naturally about the diversity of pupils. Pupils from a range of different vulnerable groups were therefore identified and discussed: pupils who are ‘EAL’ (English as an Additional Language); ‘G&T’ (Gifted and Talented); as well as pupils with SEN (Special Educational Needs). It was noted that whilst on the one hand there was a focus on ‘vulnerable children’ and that there was an awareness of vulnerable pupils’ needs, without having to focus too much on ‘labels’ [SENCO]- yet: “we tend to not overuse the word inclusion because we do like to distinguish between say EAL and SEN” [SENCO]. A tension was identified between the need to identify ‘vulnerable groups’ and a desire to celebrate and welcome diversity through inclusive practices. The range and diversity of needs within different class groups was mentioned consistently by staff members throughout the research period, with

the need to: “get to grips with all the different children, all the different needs, and work out how best to tackle each child.” [class teacher]

Significantly, it was noted by many that there were: “so many nice children that do want to learn” [class teacher]. However, again the problem with responding to their needs when faced with the challenging and complex needs of some individual pupils was emphasized: “we just waste so much time in trying to *sort out their behaviour, and it’s a real shame on those children* who are ready to learn, and do aim to please, and do want to be here.” [class teacher]

It was noted that many of the pupils came from “horrendous backgrounds” [class teacher] and that many had complicated social, emotional, behavioural and learning needs. Staff expressed feelings of sadness and an inability to provide adequate support to fully meet the needs of some of these pupils: “All of these children deserve and have needs of their own and need more support than I can give them, more than all of us can give them” [class teacher].

There was an implicit understanding by staff of the impact that the home background could have upon the pupils’ ability to access the learning environment effectively, and many staff members acknowledged the pupils’ need for love, care and a nurturing environment: “*if they’ve had any difficulties at home and they’re not resolved, you know they come in and they’re not receptive to learning... So until a child is able to come and deal and process these things and you know, be happy in themselves about who they are and you know, what’s kind of happened at home, then learning is going to be, take very much a second place.*” [class teacher]

Staff acknowledged that they were accustomed to the challenges that pupils presented with, and the impact of the home environment upon their ability to interact effectively whilst in school. However, the approach and atmosphere of the school was seen to be a strength in responding to these needs: “*we are really good at dealing with those children. I suppose it’s just time and getting on their level and getting them the opportunity not to be in classroom, obviously we have nurturing and the sunshine room.*” [class teacher]

For some staff, although this level of support for pupils was taken for granted within the school, it did cause some concern that so much impacted upon the teachers’ ability to teach effectively: “*it’s that kind of bizarre role as a teacher that, ok, I’m an educator, but we’re all here doing the job of a child psychologist and everything else that we’re not really qualified to do*” [class teacher].

Within this school context, however, the needs of each individual child on a day to day basis come first and have to be acknowledged and responded to in an appropriate way in order for that pupil to be able to engage with the learning. Therefore, as one staff member summarized: “the key is putting the child first.” [business manager]

School S: Context

Number of pupils on roll:	440
Age range of the school:	3- 11
Number of teaching staff:	18 class teachers- 2 part time
Number of support staff:	26 1 part time Family Liaison Officer
% of pupils with SEN:	47%
- % at School Action	35%
- % at School Action Plus	11%
- % with a Statement of SEN	1%
% of pupils with EAL:	4.7%
% of pupils receiving Free School Meals:	35%
% of pupils attaining Level 4 at end of KS2:	
- English	69%
- Maths	60%
- Science	72%
% transferring to Grammar School at end of Year 6:	14%
Attendance Levels:	94%
Number of fixed term exclusions- academic year 2007- 2008	20
% pupil mobility:	20%

Fig. 20: School S Contextual Factors 2008- 2009

School S is an average sized primary school, with an attached nursery provision.

Relevant contextual data has been gathered from the School Self Evaluation Form (September 2008) as well as from visits to the setting itself. The school is situated within a seaside town and has a very mixed catchment area, and this is seen as part of the positive ethos of the school: *“There is some diversity in the children’s ability, and in their characters, and that’s what I enjoy”* [class teacher].

The schools Self Evaluation Form (SEF) states that the school: “serves children from acutely deprived backgrounds” [SEF]. Most children are from “low level socio-economic backgrounds” [SEF], and many come from “single parent or multiply reconstituted families.” [SEF]. Most of the staff indicate that they recognized the poor catchment area before they applied for a job at the school, and that, indeed, that was part of the reason why they wanted to work in the particular school: *“I’ve always had it in mind that I wanted to work in a school with a low catchment area”* [class teacher]. Whilst the school staff do recognize the largely deprived

backgrounds that pupils are coming from, the potential of all pupils is noted: “all of them are *from different catchment areas: some of them are from places where it’s really difficult at home or whatever, but I don’t actually think that’s any reflection at all on what they’re capable of.... I think some people have a misconception that actually because they come from a poor background then obviously they’re going to be below average, when actually that’s not the case at all and they’re a very good set my literacy set.*” [class teacher]

The school notes that levels of ability are poor, and well below national averages, on entry into school. Many children enter the school with:

- Poor social and communication skills
- Delayed speech and language skills
- Emotional problems
- Limited life experiences
- Poor listening and attention skills.

As a result of this, staff plan additional support and interventions to respond to the needs of pupils on entry to the school. These include:

- Speech and Language assessment in Nursery and Reception
- Speech and language intervention
- Planning to develop active listening and attention skills
- Focus on emotional literacy
- Brain Gym
- Specialist support groups
- Range of learning and pastoral support staff
- Autistic Spectrum Disorder Nurture Club

The school prides itself on being: “an emotionally aware school, where pupils have a strong self image and aspirations” (SEF), and on being “a highly inclusive school” (SEF). A “holistic approach to education” (SEF) is valued, which acknowledges the skills and achievements of pupils outside the school, and outside the traditional academic curriculum. School S therefore “*aims to provide high quality education combined with the promotion of ‘wellbeing’.*” (SEF)

These principles were reinforced by staff during the Staff Meeting input (September 2008, see Appendix 15) when staff were asked to work together to agree a shared vision for Inclusion for their school, although during this activity, there is perhaps more of an emphasis upon issues around learning than emotional support:

“At S we adopt a holistic approach to enable appropriate access for all.
Via a safe and secure environment we strive to ensure everyone feels valued. Training is given to support both staff and pupils in order to overcome barriers to learning.”

There is an emphasis upon community involvement, and upon the importance of reaching out to parents in order to increase the learning potential of the pupils. The school is, therefore, active

in linking with community projects and supporting the families of their pupils through family learning, sport and leisure activities.

There is an acknowledgement that: “the context of the school means that we have to work hard to involve carers” [headteacher], and the term “*partnership in children’s education*” [headteacher] is used. Simple strategies such as encouraging the use of first names between parents and staff, including senior leaders within the school, is seen to help to break down barriers, linked to some parents’ “*very poor experiences of school themselves..... and fear of authority*” [headteacher].

School S: Actions and processes involved in developing inclusive practices:

The Team Approach

Throughout the school, the importance of ‘the team’ was evident and emphasized. This was apparent both during school visits and observations within the school setting, including during time spent in the staffroom, and during discussions with members of staff. Staff identified that the inclusive attitude and ethos within the school was a result of the particular mix of staff working together across the school, and that staff shared similar values and attitudes towards inclusive practices and the needs of the pupils within the school, including how to best support those needs.

Recruitment of new staff to fit in with the team ethos and approach was noted as being significant. New staff were said to be: “*School S people or not... and it would be very difficult to define what those people are, very difficult.*” [headteacher]

It was therefore acknowledged that it is important to develop a critical mass of people sharing a common vision and values within the school in order to be able to move inclusive practices forward. Staff acknowledged that the development of an effective team was: “all down to [the headteacher] and her choice- *we’ve got a great team*” [class teacher]

Throughout discussions with staff it was noticeable that staff talked about each other with affection and respect; that “*everybody looks after each other... and [has] got time for each other*” [class teacher]. Within the staffroom the atmosphere was relaxed, inviting and welcoming. Staff talked to each other about social events, and there was an emphasis upon shared staff social events. Staff of both genders, different age groups and different roles within the school (senior leaders, teachers and teaching assistants) mixed comfortably with each other with no evidence of particular cliques. Early fieldnotes as well as later observations emphasized that the: “staff are very familiar and close with each other- sharing details of weekend activities/ events: a nice atmosphere” [fieldnote].

A number of members of staff expressed that the friendliness of the staff and the welcoming team approach had been a key factor that had attracted them to the school. There was seen to be a shared attitude and responsibility towards the children and their needs, and this made the challenges of working in a school within a highly deprived socio-economic area, much easier to cope with: “with the staff ethos and the attitude of everybody and how everybody pulls together, *it hasn’t been as much of a challenge as I thought it would be actually*” [class teacher].

Staff across the school identified that they felt fully supported and that, when working within such challenging contexts, this was an important and valued aspect of the school support

systems. Crucially, staff felt that the team approach was non-judgmental: staff were at ease with asking for support, or admitting that they did not have a ready answer or solution to meeting the needs of particular pupils: “the environment is genuinely non-critical”. [class teacher]

Staff understood that this is not always typical of practice within all schools; that in other school settings there is sometimes an assumption that individuals should know everything, or find the answers and solutions for themselves. Thus the approach within School S was seen as special: “an absolute eye opener.” [class teacher]

The different expertise and experiences of other staff members were valued and shared to ensure that all staff members felt supported: “we just support each other and talk through the challenges and come up with a new idea.” [class teacher]

Low rates of staff mobility were seen to contribute to the effective development of a whole school approach to developing inclusive practices. It was noted that staff: “tended to stay unless career opportunities move them on” [SENCO]

When considering the reason for the low mobility of staff within a school responding to diverse and challenging contexts, staff indicated that a key factor in this was the team approach. As a senior member of staff summarized:

“we work very much as a team and we’re supportive of each other and there’s that sort of friendship as well as colleagues. A great deal of respect for each other. I think that most people are happy at school, and they kind of reason, unless I’m moving on for a reason, why move when I’m happy?” [SENCO]

In relation to the development of a strong team approach within the school, two senior leaders within the school talked proudly about a phrase that has been used by Investors in People to describe the school: “that we have a flat hierarchy here” [headteacher and SENCO].

They note that “everyone is equal but we have a different job to do” [headteacher] and that “although we know who’s *at the top and how the system works down, there’s not that aloofness*. We all work together and, if a job is needed to be done, anyone of us will pick up and do it, even *if it’s scraping plates in the canteen*” [SENCO].

The emphasis placed throughout the school and staff members on the importance and value of a team approach implicitly models inclusive values and attitudes within the staff, and this has an impact upon inclusive practices for the pupils. A caring, enabling and supportive working environment has been established built upon principles of equality and inclusion. This has been achieved: “almost informally because the network and the teams are strong. But we also *recognize that we’re only as strong as our weakest link.*” [headteacher]

Feelings around the importance and value of the team approach were further reinforced during the staff meeting activity in September 2008 (see Appendix 15); when identifying factors which

support the school in developing inclusive practices, ‘the team’ was overwhelmingly identified by staff, with an emphasis upon responses such as:

- good support from staff
- working well as a team in year groups and as a group
- a caring environment

Staffing

Throughout the research visits, staffing was something that was often discussed during conversations and strategic focus group discussions. For the senior leaders particularly, the development of staff, through developing their expertise and ensuring that their skills were used within appropriate and relevant roles, was seen as a crucial factor in the development of inclusive practices within the school. Indeed, during strategic focus group discussions and timeline research activities, staffing was prioritized by the staff as significant positive factors impacting upon the overall development of the school and inclusive practices within it: “staffing is something very significant.” [SENCO] There was a clear focus upon valuing and nurturing staff relationships within the school setting, and, as with the discussions above about the team approach, this focus on inclusive values and principles at a whole staff level creates a strong foundation and culture of inclusion with which to build upon with pupils and families.

It was noted that this had not always been the case, and that contextual circumstances had provided a situation where roles and expertise had to be delegated throughout the school. However, the benefits of this approach both for the development and availability of high quality skills and expertise throughout the school, and for the professional development of individuals is emphasized. As the headteacher noted, when she first took on the role of headteacher: “straight away I could see that I was going to have to let go of more things, and pass more things over to other people, which in a way was really good for them and their professional development. And I think that it’s really good for the school, not just relying on one person or one or two people, you then have got far more experts in the school who can step in and support other staff.” [headteacher] Other staff comment with respect and pride about the amount of specialist and expert knowledge held within the school, and how this is shared in a positive and supportive way to acknowledge the challenges of working in the particular school environment, and to support staff to find ways to move forward. Within the school, there is, therefore, “a huge amount of experience, the sheer quality and the extent of their knowledge that’s extraordinary, it’s phenomenal.” [class teacher]

Part of the success of this approach, is seen to be the creation and evolution of a number of specialist roles and responsibilities within the school. These have been developed as a direct response to pupil need. A number of roles were therefore discussed, including the appointment

of “*specialist people... to run the speech and language group*” [SENCO]; the new appointment of the Learning Mentor; and the important development of the role of the Family Liaison Officer (FLO). These staffing developments are seen to have impacted positively upon the development of inclusive practices within the school. Whilst the setting up of ‘expert’ roles can help to support pupils with diverse needs more fully and effectively, it is possible to question whether this will always be done in as inclusive a way as possible. There can potentially be the danger, when setting up specialist roles, that rather than supporting inclusion, it can lead to increased levels of segregation and exclusion into withdrawn input groups. At times, teachers and other staff members can be left feeling de-skilled and that their responsibility for key pupils is taken away.

This situation is not seen to be the case by staff members within this school context. Indeed, it was emphasized that the approach of providing specialist staff and ‘experts’ was also balanced with training at whole school staff level in key areas of priority to ensure that all staff felt able to cope with new challenges:

“The ASD (Autistic Spectrum Difficulties) training was with the *whole school*. That’s something that I really believe the whole school need to be aware of, and any new staff have subsequently been sent on training.” [SENCO]

Early fieldnotes when talking to staff within the school also emphasized recognition within the school that the key priority was to support staff to develop their skills and understanding, and that the ‘specialist people’ and ‘experts’ could do this: “*Senior TA’s main role- to support staff to set up groups. Now, not having to DO it all- instead supporting and empowering other staff.*” [fieldnote]

Grouping to support pupil needs:

Ability setting within this school was viewed as a practical solution to meet the diverse and wide ranging needs of the pupils in year groups from Year 2 onwards within the school, with setting for literacy and numeracy: “addressing the very broad spread of ability from children with significant learning difficulties to 1/3 or 1/4 of the cohort who are potential grammar school” [headteacher]. The tension between ability setting and the development of inclusive education was noted, with the headteacher commenting that: “*the ability setting is not perhaps an ideal, it’s more a practicality, but that feeds into the ideal in another way... it’s something that we do that leads back to the inclusiveness.*” [headteacher]

It was noted that this was a historical practice which had started with setting by ability for numeracy from Year 1 some time ago. This had then been extended to ability setting for literacy, where the impact for all pupils- particularly those at opposite ends of the ability

spectrum was emphasized. The impact for pupils with lower ability across their school experiences and in other areas of the curriculum was noted in terms of the growing confidence that pupils had: “they then actually felt confident enough that their opinion was worthwhile and that nobody was going to laugh at them *because that doesn’t happen anymore, that wouldn’t happen to them so they would make contributions to those lessons as well.*” [headteacher]

Staff demonstrated understanding of the impact of self esteem upon pupils’ ability to learn, and it was noted that ability setting provided a safe learning environment which enabled the pupil to experience appropriate and realistic challenges without de-motivating them: “you should always *reach for the stars and if you hit the moon that’s ok, but yes, you should put those challenges and aspirations, but they’ve got to be within reach... if it’s not accessible to them at all, all you’re doing is demoralising them* and saying well actually most of the children can understand *this but you’re stupid so you can’t, and you’re not going to verbalise that, but that is how the child feels.*” [headteacher] Staff viewed ability setting as an accepted practice to support the inclusion of all pupils within the school, not openly questioning the relevance or impact of this practice upon current pupils.

Further groups of pupils working at significantly lower levels of ability were identified as requiring different curriculum content. These children accessed this through withdrawn small group support. Thus, intensive support was provided by a part time teacher for a “very needy group of 6 children” [fieldnote] who could “barely read and barely write” [headteacher]. It was noted that these children required a “completely different curriculum content- developing basic reading/ writing skills and phonological awareness” [fieldnote]. The level of this support is clearly significant and priority and value has been placed upon the needs of those pupils by providing a qualified teacher to work with them. However, despite this, staff noted that the group had made “*limited progress, and that we are now having to explore different ‘barriers to learning’ including parental attitude and limited expectations.*” [fieldnote]

This discussion is interesting, including the use of very inclusive language and terminology ‘removing barriers to learning’. Key staff are focused upon looking holistically at factors which may impact upon pupils’ learning and participation within the school. There is, however, little discussion about whether it would be possible and appropriate to support all pupils more effectively through mixed ability groupings. Rather, the current ability setting system seems to be accepted without question.

Within the school setting there has also been a particular focus upon developing expertise and knowledge about the needs of pupils with ASD. This has been in response to increasing

numbers of pupils experiencing these difficulties. In addition to delivering training to all staff to widen understanding of the difficulties experienced by pupils with ASD, specific provisions have been set up to meet their individual needs. In particular, the school now operates a daily nurture club provision which provides support for pupils with ASD during playtimes and lunchtimes, to relieve anxiety. These pupils are given the choice to socialize with a small group of peers (mostly with ASD) within the school building, rather than going out onto the playground with the rest of the school. The pupils with ASD also: “eat separately from the other children in the hall, we have a little screen which blocks off some of the noise because they *don’t like noise, so they go to the back of the canteen and they know* that that is a quiet area.” [senior teaching assistant]

When asked about the impact that such withdrawn and separate provisions have upon pupil perceptions of each other within the school, staff emphasise that the provisions are not enforced, that for the pupils it is “all about choice” [senior teaching assistant]. It is also noted that the provisions, although set up specifically to respond to the needs of pupils with ASD within the school, are not fixed, so as to enable other pupils to access the support or provision when needed: “*it’s not about closed doors- it couldn’t be could it, because if it’s the nurture club it’s about supporting all our children.*” [senior teaching assistant]

These provisions are responding directly to the needs of pupils with ASD. Staff within the school have an understanding of times and situations which will cause anxiety and stress to pupils with ASD, and have planned provisions to alleviate and reduce that stress as far as possible. However, it is noticeable that the provisions that have been set up and promoted are withdrawn and exclusive provisions.

School S: emotions, feelings and beliefs associated with the experience of developing inclusive practices:

Generally, the language used to describe working in the school was positive and enthusiastic: staff members shared the warmth of their feelings towards the school:

- *“I fell in love with the school automatically... the people she picks are just lovely people... it's exciting”* [class teacher]
- *“It's extraordinary, it's phenomenal....It's certainly fantastic... it inspires me”* [class teacher]
- *“That's what I enjoy... It's great actually when you're teaching... Wow!! ...they loved it....This is fantastic”* [class teacher]

The fact that there is a *“sense of all working together for that common aim”* [SENCO and senior teaching assistant], was emphasized.

Understandings of inclusion

Staff attitudes towards inclusion permeated through discussions, without the need for prompting. Staff were clear about personal philosophies towards inclusion, and across the school, there was general agreement on what inclusion meant. For most ‘inclusion’ was seen to be about rights and equality of opportunities- including being given appropriate support to be able to participate fully: *“It's about bringing every child into education. Every child deserves an education. Having the best education that we can give them.”* [headteacher]

As one teacher joked: *“we take everyone and everything!”* [class teacher]

This comment is interesting: it is difficult to determine whether this was meant as a positive comment reflecting pride in the fact that the school is so inclusive, or a more derogatory and negative comment reflecting the fact that the school literally would take anyone, regardless of their needs. For the teacher, the comment was a throw-away joke but beneath it tensions exist, and it is quite possible that both interpretations could be accurate. Similar tensions were apparent during the focus staff meeting (September 2008, see Appendix 15) which explored with staff their perceptions about inclusion. On the individual questionnaires completed, a variety of ways of considering Inclusion were included. Generally these fell into three main themes, with inclusion being defined as:

1. Including all pupils together- regardless of need:
 - Pupils of all backgrounds/ behaviours/ languages being taught within the classroom at their own level, work being differentiated accordingly, rather than removed to be taught in smaller units (Questionnaire 3)
2. Including pupils in appropriately resourced and differentiated provisions to meet their particular needs and enable them to make progress:
 - To include every child into the education process... this may not mean that every child should access mainstream school, but be included in appropriate provision (Questionnaire 1)

3. Providing equality and safety, and to value the pupil:

- Ensuring children feel equal, safe and treated as an individual (Questionnaire 11)

One staff member also emphasized that it was important to know when NOT to include someone: Not inclusion for inclusion's sake (Questionnaire 6)

In other parts of the questionnaire, staff members reflected upon issues which influenced or impacted upon their understanding and perception of inclusion. For many, current government policy and a perceived lack of resources to support inclusion within mainstream schools was an influential factor:

- I feel the government didn't really consider the implications inclusion would mean- the need to be trained, the extra money in schools (Questionnaire 2)
- The government should be placing financial support in schools to make sure schools are able to give the proper support (Questionnaire 5)

For some, personal reflections upon their own school experiences have impacted significantly upon their feelings and their teaching style:

- My own schooling was very difficult and I felt an outcast because I found reading difficult. I remember being taken out of lessons and given extra help and that made me feel hopelessly dim. This has been the biggest impact when considering inclusion. (Questionnaire 4)

Other questionnaires reflect the tension that staff members feel about the notion of inclusion- and the battle between the moral right for all to receive an inclusive education, and the challenges this presents, including impact upon both the teacher and other pupils:

- Actually experiencing trying to include everyone just because you have to despite it having no positive impact on a child has impacted on my understanding (Questionnaire 6)
- Trying desperately to deal with certain individuals within a whole class context. Is it fair on the other children in the class? Is it fair on the children with a specific need? (Questionnaire 7)
- Working with very SEN children- where they have flourished through effective support in school (Questionnaire 10)

Issues that staff raised relating to factors which hinder the development of inclusive practices within the school setting also related to the tensions identified above. In particular, challenging behaviour and the impact of some pupils upon their peers were identified as key factors.

During the conversations with individual staff members throughout the research process, two different aspects of being able to include all pupils emerged as significant. At one level the need to support pupils with emotional and behavioural needs was emphasized, and there was a strong focus on this throughout the school, apparent in the setting up of various nurture groups and in the leadership teams approach to managing pupils with emotional and behavioural needs. Early

fieldnotes noted the: “Clear focus on the need to make a child feel safe- then they will become a learner. Pastoral side very important to inclusion.” [fieldnote]

At another level, the impact of trying to meet the needs of pupils with lower ability levels was emphasized, and it noted that for some pupils the baseline starting points were getting lower and lower: *“the whole issue of inclusion is about starting from the where the child is, the child’s baseline, and I think that we have such varying baselines. The worrying thing is that our baselines for different children are getting lower and lower.”* [SENCO] It is also seen to be about ensuring that everybody has the same access in school; *“It’s about ensuring equality of provision but at the same time monitoring the more vulnerable groups very carefully and adding the support and scaffolds to enable them to access the same.”* [SENCO]

The natural use of terminology here about ‘support and scaffolds’ is very inclusive, and there is an emphasis upon the need to carefully monitor equality of provision for ‘vulnerable groups’. The vulnerable groups here are not specified, and within the school context there are certainly pupils from a range of vulnerable groups and situations. The emphasis here has not just been upon inclusion relating to SEN pupils.

Further discussions, however, naturally emphasise issues relating to the effective inclusion of pupils with high levels of SEN, and little is mentioned throughout the range of conversations and strategic focus group discussions about the needs of other vulnerable groups despite the relatively high incidence of pupils who are particularly Gifted and Talented, pupils who have English as an Additional Language, pupils from areas of high social deprivation and so on.

Thus, it is the pupils with SEN that are seen to cause concern, with so many pupils with high level SEN needs requiring high levels of very specialist input with withdrawn small group or 1:1 support.

Staff question the appropriateness of this approach to inclusion- highlighting the exclusionary aspects of practices where individual pupils are not able to access the learning environment with their peers without high levels of individualized and specialist support: *“I think that you have to query whether that actually is inclusion, and it is one of those questions that we ask- is it actually inclusion when they have to be removed from class so much to have specialist input because they can’t even access the differentiated provision at their level- they are so much lower”* [SENCO]

Indeed, it is not only in the classroom that inclusion for some pupils is questioned by staff members: *“You often see that those children don’t play, don’t have real friendships in the playground either, so it’s almost exclusion by inclusion”* [SENCO]. The headteacher also echoes this sentiment, emphasizing that whilst within the school: *“We don’t turn children*

away” [headteacher], for some, despite their best efforts to be inclusive, “our inclusion almost *becomes exclusion*” [headteacher]. The impact upon other pupils as a result of the school’s attempts to include pupils with high levels of complex needs is also noted, in terms of the amount of resources that are used to support them: “*I think that they want so much from us now, so much 1:1 work, or 1:3 group work, and I think that that takes a teaching assistant out from where there is a lot of other need. There are particular children around the school that take so much resources*” [SENCO]

This is a significant factor which can impact upon staff perceptions of the value and appropriateness of fully inclusive principles within a school setting. The sentiment is echoed in conversations with other staff members: “how long do you keep somebody in the class, try and *get them involved? At the cost of everybody else*” [class teacher]. The tension between the ‘cost’ of high levels of support being given to one or two pupils, and thereby being ‘taken away’ from all other pupils is recognized.

Staff are also aware of the tensions that exist within the current educational system with regard to having the necessary support, from the government and existing educational policies and directives, to be able to develop fully inclusive practices within mainstream school setting. Thus, inclusion was seen as an ‘ideology’ rather than a ‘reality’: “*Inclusion is really just an ideology*”, *schools are not supported with enough resources to be able to be fully inclusive- therefore inclusion “can’t happen in reality”* [fieldnote]. Another class teacher emphasized the fact that principles of inclusive practice have to be very carefully adapted and applied to meet the needs and suit the context of different school settings. Fieldnotes after discussions within this teacher captured how the teacher talked about the issues:

“The Yr 2 CT commented that you can take the “key principles of Inclusion, but these then have to be applied very carefully to different contexts”

She used the metaphor of likening inclusion/ inclusive practice to families. Most families do similar things- eg eat, drink, sleep etc, but do this in different ways, relating to their own characteristics- it would be the same with schools: schools have to do *similar things, but do these in different ways to respond to individual context etc.*” [fieldnote]

Inclusion and developing inclusive practices is a difficult issue for staff, despite having such strongly embedded and shared inclusive values and principles permeating the whole environment. There are tensions voiced regarding the school’s ability to respond inclusively to meet the needs of every pupil, and staff members critically questioned whether the inclusive approaches actually promoted exclusionary practices, in relation to the individual having

withdrawn, specialist support and intervention. Issues relating to tensions that exist regarding equality of opportunity were also raised. Staff questioned whether, by providing such high levels of support to ensure that key individuals could access and participate within the learning environment, other children were actually denied equal opportunities to receive support to enable them to participate fully. Tensions were further exacerbated by an acknowledgement that, for some pupils with challenging and complex needs, the inclusive approach and environment provided by the mainstream school setting had been appropriate. Thus: *“it’s tricky because sometimes it does actually work”* [SENCO].

This provokes the tension between how and when to make decisions about the most appropriate provision, and indeed, whether, in a fully inclusive education system such a choice and decision would be needed: *“the difficulty is, do you put them in mainstream and wait for them to fail and put them in special school, or do you not even give them the chance, and put them straight in special school because you don’t actually know until they’re thrown in.”* [SENCO]. The comment of one class teacher sums up the difficulties, complexities and tensions which exist for staff: *“At our school we include everyone. That is the ethos of the school, we just include everyone- but how easy that is..... that’s the million dollar question!”* [fieldnote]

Ways of talking about the pupils

Throughout the research period, it became interesting to note the various ways that emotions, feelings and beliefs became apparent and evident in the ways that staff members talked about the pupils. This implicitly reinforced the verbalized discussions that staff members had about their feelings about inclusion, and demonstrated the depth of the shared attitude and pervasive culture of inclusive values and principles within the school. As the headteacher noted: *“It’s about all of us being here and being passionate about doing our very best for our children”* [headteacher]

The use of ‘our children’ here is significant, and was mirrored around the school throughout the research period. Staff members demonstrated their ‘passion’ for teaching and for the pupils, families and colleagues with whom they were working; and this was implicit in the use of ‘our’ to talk about the pupils with whom they were working. At times, however, tensions were apparent between these implicit and strongly embedded inclusive values, and the impact upon staff members of the reality of having to manage challenging and complex needs on a day to day basis.

It is significant that one of the first changes that the headteacher made on first coming to the school, related to how staff talked about the pupils. She noted that: *“it always baffled me why people would say our children can’t do that, well if that’s what you say and believe then they*

never will do it, because you're never giving them the opportunity to." [headteacher]. As a result, she notes that the issue was discussed with staff, with the phrase 'banned', the development of shared values and attitudes, and an acknowledgement that people are now coming from a "completely different point of view". [headteacher]

The relationships that are encouraged between staff members and pupils mirror the supportive and enabling relationships between staff members. Staff noted that they considered that they developed close, almost familial, relationships with the pupils, and that this helped to engage the pupils, earn their respect and trust, and that when this was achieved successfully with pupils, the teaching role became easier to manage. As one teacher noted about a conversation that she had recently had with colleagues about shared values and attitudes towards the pupils: "she said to me, you know in a way we are not just their teachers, we are their aunts and their uncles, and *that's exactly how I view these children.*" [class teacher]

This closeness of relationship with the pupils was also mirrored in the way that staff members talked with empathy and sensitivity about the backgrounds that the pupils were coming from: "*we have to be very aware of what is going on in these children's lives, and how ready they are to learn*" [headteacher].

As identified above, knowledge about the backgrounds that pupils were coming from was not used as an excuse for lower standards in learning or behaviour, rather, staff members acknowledged the often difficult and deprived backgrounds that the pupils were coming from in order to be able to redress some of the difficulties, and to help to 'make a difference' to the pupils: "I expect them to work, but I feel for them and their situations, and I feel that I want to try and make a difference for them." [class teacher]

It was noted by staff, that pupils from these deprived backgrounds often: "need to have stability in their lives from an adult who can be a good role model hopefully for them within a school context." [class teacher]

For the staff, the importance of the pastoral side of the relationship, over the teaching/ learning side was emphasized: for many: "*that's probably more my focus than anything*" [class teacher] Again, it was reinforced that before any learning could occur, for many pupils, their emotional needs needed to be addressed first. As one teacher noted: "the children are here primarily for *love and care*". [class teacher]

Staff members acknowledged the impact that their attitude to the pupils could have upon them, and were respectful and appreciative of the pupils' emotional attachments to them, even when they were time consuming and demanding at times: "they respond to that affection and my enjoyment of being with them, and wanting the best for them, and they prove that, you know,

time and time again, by coming in with snippets and sharing with me what they've done, not leaving you alone to a certain extent.... I think actually that is so positive because they want that attention from you because they respect you, and they need you actually at that point."
[class teacher]

Building upon the positive emotional relationships that were established with pupils across the school, staff members also talked about the teaching relationship, and the excitement that they felt when supporting pupils to make progress and to achieve. Class groups were generally talked about in positive terms: *"they're a wonderful group and they're very easy to teach and they do listen, they are attentive"* [class teacher], although at times there was a tension between how most teaching groups were viewed (and these were perhaps some of the more able ability sets), and how less able class groups or individuals were viewed (see below).

Staff members talked openly about the satisfaction that they themselves felt when working with the children, and expressed their passion and excitement in the teaching role: *"It's great actually when you're teaching, and you get that satisfaction from them, that they're engaged and challenged... and you see that spark in their eye"* [class teacher].

Many of the staff members acknowledged the importance of really getting to know and understand the individual needs of each pupil within the class: and this was seen as a key focus across the school. This was linked directly to staff perceptions of issues relating to inclusion, with one staff member expressing that: *"it's just about getting to know the children and actually developing strategies to suit them... and I think that's what inclusion is, it's about having your own opinion, you know, knowing the children, and teaching to suit the children."* [class teacher]. Linked with this was also an emphasis upon identifying and explicitly acknowledging the strengths and individual interests of every pupil. It was noted that there was a: *"big focus at the moment on more able children"* [class teacher], but the focus on identifying strengths was seen to be more far-reaching than this: it was, more importantly about supporting pupils who were less able, and less emotionally secure to feel confident that they had areas of strength. This was seen to be important within such a diverse catchment area, with pupils with such complex underlying emotional needs: *"It's about learning about them, learning exactly what they're very good at, because once they're very confident and know that you know then they're going to bloom and everything else, that's what I think, because they're confident, they think oh she knows that I'm really fantastic at art and now I'm going to try and prove to her, I think it's really important to concentrate on their actual, you know, their real talent that they've got, because everybody has got one."* [class teacher]

Despite this clear emphasis and recognition of the strengths and positives of the pupils, tensions were apparent in the way that pupils with more complex and challenging SEN were discussed. Many of the staff members automatically, and without prompting, listed the needs of some of the more complex and challenging pupils, reverting to the use of labels rather than detailed descriptions of their needs, and their identified strengths. One teacher, describing the different sets and groups of pupils that she taught during the day noted: *“I’ve got two boys at the front who suffer from ADHD, and some days they can just be totally, you know, and a lot of my energy has to be focused on them... I’ve got four autistic boys, one of which really suffers anxiety, really badly... I’ve got three ADHD boys”* [class teacher]

Other staff members talked about their own personal feelings of ‘failure’ when left feeling that pupils within their class group were not able to access the teaching input as fully as possible. One fieldnote evidenced the feelings that were shared with me by one class teacher during a research visit:

“the teacher talked about his feelings of failure at times when key needy children (with a Statement) come to him having clearly not understood the point of the lesson- CT feels that this makes him feel that he has “failed him”.” [fieldnote]

Other staff members also talk about the very high levels of need of some challenging pupils, and personal feelings of not being adequately supported or resourced (by the current educational system) to be able to respond enough to meet those needs. The experience of working with them and teaching them was therefore described as: *“Sometimes like banging your head against a brick wall”* [class teacher]

It was noted that although staff members try as hard as they can, sometimes this still was not enough to support an individual pupil, and to ensure that that pupils needs did not impact upon other pupils within the classroom. At times, discussion about this was tinged with frustration by the staff members: *“you do do as much as you can. I’ve got a child in the classroom who constantly makes silly noises, really ridiculous noises and will shout out things”* [class teacher]

At other times it was the huge gap in learning ability that was emphasized, with teachers questioning how possible and appropriate it was to include pupils operating at such significantly lower levels than their peers. At times, across the school, use was made of the term ‘mental age’ to talk about the needs of individual pupils, with pupils being pointed out as “having a mental age of a 2 year old”. [fieldnote]

In this school, a tension exists between the implicit and shared inclusive values and attitudes which are evident in the staff approach and atmosphere throughout the whole school, and staff members’ individual experiences of pupils who are more challenging and complex, which lead them to question the inclusive environment that they are providing. These individual

experiences sometimes lead the staff members to express feelings of frustration towards the individual challenging and complex pupils who are taking up so many valuable resources.

Yet, despite the challenges that they openly discuss, staff are predominantly focused upon developing effective and emotional bonds with their pupils in order for the pupils to make progress and succeed. It is therefore acknowledged that: *“obviously it’s a very rewarding job to think that we’re taking such a big part in the children’s lives”*. [class teacher]

Indeed, it is acknowledged by the headteacher that, because of the challenges that the school presents, staff members have to be fully committed and passionate about the pupils and about making a difference, and, despite the natural frustrations at times, this helps to understand the overwhelmingly positive approach and response to the needs of all pupils from staff members throughout the school:

“People either love working in schools like this with a challenge or they don’t and I believe that it attracts people who believe passionately that everybody deserves an education however naughty they might be. When you hear the stories of these children it just gets under your skin and you can’t let go. It’s just part and parcel of this school”
[headteacher]

Developing a Moral Responsibility

In this school there is a clear sense, linked to the quote from the headteacher presented above, that staff members had made a reflective and thoughtful choice about the type of teacher that they wanted to become, and their greater role in making a difference to disadvantaged and needy pupils. No staff members suggested that their role was simply ‘a job’ or a ‘way to pay the bills’. Instead, they viewed their role within the particular school context as much more significant and meaningful: *“I wanted to make that difference for those children”* [senior teaching assistant]

Indeed, staff point out that it is at times of stress and challenge within the social context that this is particularly important: *“sometimes when the behaviour bogs you down, that’s when the support comes in, because somebody else will say, but we’re making a difference.”* [headteacher] Other staff members also emphasized the social aspect of their role, in terms of providing pupils with a different viewpoint and perspective on the possibilities for their future. This aspect of the role was talked about with passion and enthusiasm, with a feeling that they, the staff members, were privileged to be able to impact upon the lives of their pupils: *“I think all the time you’re teaching you like to think you can change people’s lives, and I think, in my opinion, you’re lucky to have one person in my class each year and they go on to change their life.”* [class teacher]

This feeling of social responsibility towards improving aspirations and outcomes for the pupils was linked by staff members with their desire to provide pupils with an appropriate role model. Many staff members identified and acknowledged that the pupils that they were working with often did not have access to appropriate adult role models or consistent and structured boundaries within the home environment. The role of teacher therefore became more than simply imparting knowledge to the pupils, it also became closely connected with the pupils need to: “have stability in their lives from an adult who can be a good role model within a school context” [class teacher]

Other staff members also talked specifically about their desire to provide an appropriate male role model to boys coming from disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds, many of whom may not have a stable male/ father figure within their lives:

“It’s one of the reasons I came into teaching, as a male, was really to give an alternative male role model. I’m trying not to stereotype about the males they see in their life, but often they are very masculine, overly protective. And that’s what they think they need to realise, that’s what they think they need to be. And you know, I’m not like that, but you know I have fun, I jump in, I like sport, I watch football, I swear when the team loses. That’s fine, there’s times and places to do that. So that’s why I came into teaching and that what I hope that I try and get across. I’ve seen a lot of boys try to please me, which I look at that as a positive step because, you know, they want me to notice them, they want them to be recognised for who they are.” [class teacher]

Staff members also acknowledged the importance of building opportunities to reflect upon their practice in order to continually develop and adapt their own skills as a teacher. Emphasis was placed upon the value of thinking and reflection, including group and whole staff reflection in order to move whole school practice and thinking forward. Indeed, this reflective, stimulating and critical approach was a particular feature of the staff meetings that I observed, where staff freely and openly engaged in high level, critical and challenging discussions about a range of issues and tensions within current educational practices and policies.

In individual discussions with staff members, the importance of reflection for their own personal development was emphasised. There was an implicit understanding that even when you are a ‘good’ teacher, there is still always a need for further reflection and thinking to move practices forward and adapt and change teaching approaches to meet the particular needs of different individuals or cohorts: *“I started out as a good teacher, I’m not always able to be a good teacher for whatever reason, therefore, I like to feel that I can ask.”* [class teacher]

As discussed earlier in the section on the team approach, the importance of acknowledging that you did not always have the right idea or solution, and of feeling comfortable with working

collaboratively with others to consider new ways forward was emphasized and seen to be a key feature of being an effective reflective practitioner. The need to “talk through the challenges *and come up with a new idea*” [class teacher] was therefore encouraged, with many staff members talking openly about ‘changing strategies’, ‘new approaches’ and ‘different ways forward’. As the headteacher commented: “*I think the fact that there’s professional dialogue and support between the adults in school is key because we never write off anybody as well you’re not managing or you’re not good enough at that, if someone asks the question then we always develop them.*” [headteacher]

Practices and approaches to respond to the needs of pupils within this school are not seen to be fixed, there was clear evidence of a shared staff understanding of the need to work flexibly, creatively and collaboratively to meet the diverse needs of the pupils. Staff members were encouraged, and felt comfortable, to share their challenges with other colleagues, with other colleagues providing opportunities for reflection, discussion and sharing of new possibilities and approaches. As one staff member commented: *It’s a learning process... when you have time to reflect, it’s quite difficult reflecting, but when you have that time, you can actually make use of what you’ve learnt from each situation*” [class teacher]

As this teacher notes, reflection can be difficult, particularly within a busy and challenging school environment. Providing opportunities and an atmosphere and culture where reflective practice is encouraged and modeled is therefore seen to be key to supporting the development of inclusive practices in the school. Within this particular school, there was clear evidence of senior leaders modeling to other staff members ways to engage in reflective practice, and the value of it for moving practice forward in appropriate and contextually sensitive ways. Thus, during observed staff meetings, senior leaders naturally modeled to colleagues ways to discuss, share and critique personal philosophies- openly reflecting upon the impact that those may have upon their own practice. Fieldnotes after observed staff meetings therefore noted that senior leaders “*freely shared her own philosophies about learning/ education- “I personally believe...” “because of my personal experiences, I think....”* [fieldnote]. Stimulated and prompted by this natural approach, other staff members were observed to share similar experiences and philosophies to enable a deeper group discussion of the focus issues:

- “Staff engaged in a free critical and challenging discussion about national context- lots of staff feeding comments into the discussion.
- SENCO talked informally about Bloom’s Taxonomy on a handout: all staff seemed quite familiar with this model: is it something that is discussed and fed into discussions regularly? Is it known/ understood to all? How is it used within school setting?
- Staff identified and acknowledged dichotomies between Standards Agenda – having to achieve high standards and wish to respond to individual need: what do you do if a child is verbally able but not ready to write? Discussion about highly funded research

looking into education around the world- finding that children who start formal education later do better: that has been dismissed by government- critical engagement in the issues.

- Very reflective
- Reflective Thought For the Week posters introduced by SENCO, which will be displayed in the staff room- lots of challenging quotes, which staff responded positively to.” [fieldnote]

Chapter 6: Discussion

Overview

The data gathered from the two schools captures the complexity of inclusion and demonstrates that to develop our understanding of inclusive practices within schools it is not possible to simply focus upon discrete actions and processes. A complex interaction between a range of different variables and factors needs to be fully explored in order to be able to fully understand the issue.

For the purposes of this study, a model which explores resources to support inclusion and barriers to inclusion (Ainscow et al, 2006) has been adapted to provide a framework for considering and conceptualizing the experiences and accounts of the staff members. The model therefore presents and discusses the following key themes which have all emerged through the Data Analysis and Presentation:

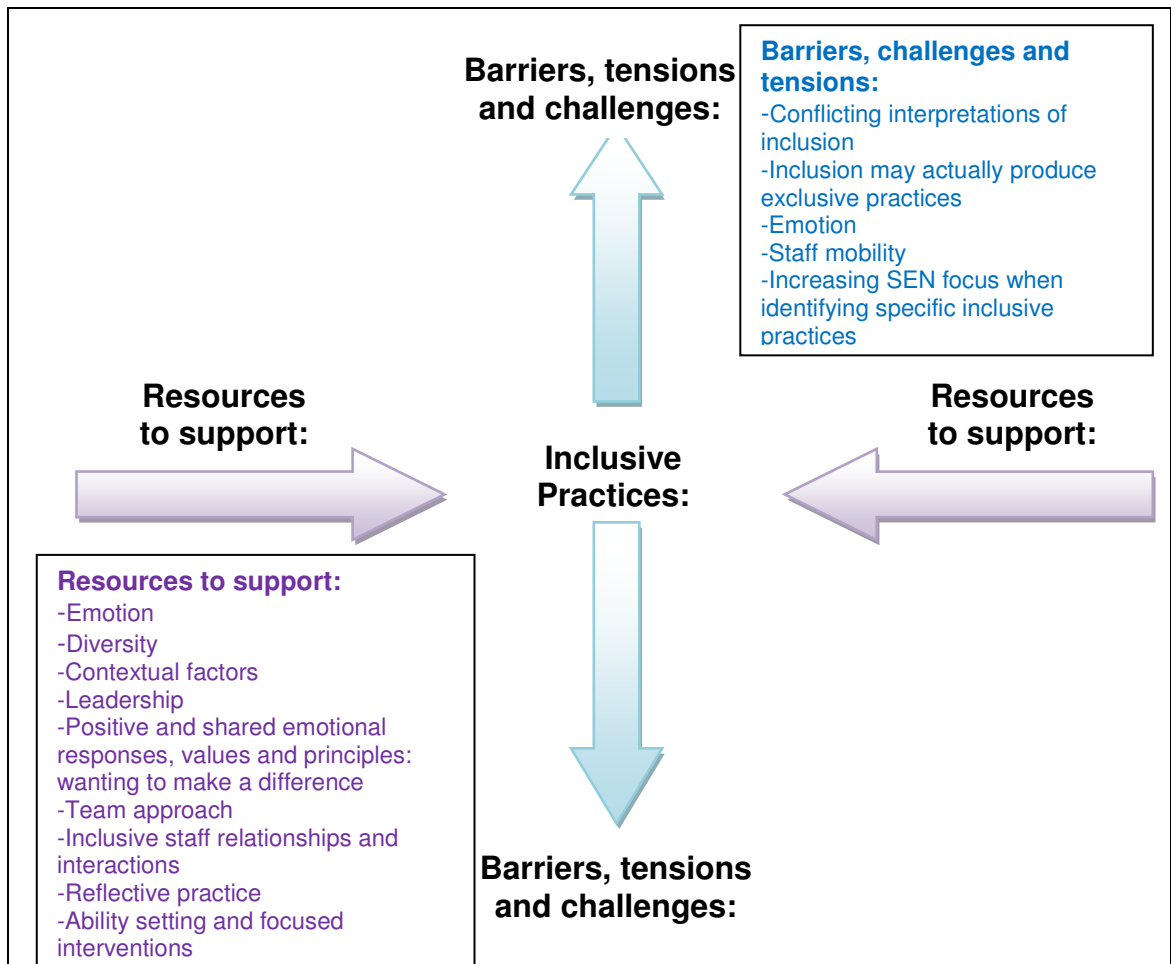


Fig. 21: Resources to support and Barriers, tensions and challenges

These themes are complex and tensions are apparent both within and between the two groups of factors presented. The interactions and inter-relationship between many of the elements are

complex and dynamic, and the following discussions emphasise this complexity by avoiding the reductionist approach of simply presenting each in turn through a linear list of principles and practices.

What is understood by the term ‘inclusion’?

One of the central issues within this study is to more clearly understand interpretations of ‘inclusion’ and ‘developing inclusive practices’ within current educational discourse and practitioner perspectives. Discussions about the resources to support inclusion and barriers, tensions and challenges are therefore contextualized within the schools own perspectives and understandings of the problematic concept of inclusion.

Data from the two schools reinforces the complexity of definitions and understandings of inclusion identified through the Literature Review. The data showed that perspectives on inclusion provided by staff members within the two schools varied widely, not only between different members of staff, but also by the same member of staff at different times, as a result of their current experiences. The complexity of the issue for staff members facing the day to day challenge of mediating between prescribed educational systems and outcomes and fluid inclusive values and principles was evidenced through the data. Data demonstrated that as inclusion is such an emotive and value laden concept, it will always be impacted upon by the particular personal feelings and experiences of those involved, and to date there has been “*insufficient consideration*” (Day et al, 2006: 611) of the impact of emotional factors upon teacher identity and work practices.

In both schools, a general sense of staff holding shared values was articulated: “all working together for that common aim” (SENCO).

There was an emphasis upon striving to “include everyone” (teacher), and the centrality of the child: “inclusion is about starting from where the child is” (SENCO), although the detail of inclusive values and principles within the school was not specifically defined. Rather, what emerged was:

“a common consensus amongst adults around values of respect for difference and a commitment to offering all students access to learning opportunities.” (Dyson et al, 2002: p4)

This common purpose was seen to encompass the overall culture and ethos of the school, and was largely not articulated using specific discourses of inclusive principles and philosophies. As Nias et al (1989) note, the beliefs and values which underpin a culture are often the hardest to clearly identify and define, because they have become so entrenched within the overall way of working within an organization. Thus, because the values are shared, there is:

“little need to articulate them. Many beliefs are indeed so deeply buried that individuals do not even know what they are.” (Nias et al, 1989: 11)

For staff in both schools, a key issue seemed to be a focus upon “making a difference” (teacher) to the pupils with whom they worked. This focus transcended narrow conceptualizations about stereotyped SEN pupils and instead considered the range of pupils with whom they worked, encompassing a broader notion of inclusion around principles of access, participation and opportunity around the model of Education for All (Ainscow et al, 2006)

Staff saw themselves as privileged to have a job where you can “make a contribution that is valuable” (teacher). This was seen to be the “bonus” (teacher) of the often challenging teaching role, and a key part of the embedded inclusive values and principles within both schools. The nature of this heightened sense of moral duty and pride in that duty is recognized in other work (Hargreaves, 1999; Scott et al, 2001).

Whilst these values and principles seemed to form the unwritten inclusive ethos within both schools, when encouraged to provide individual written definitions of inclusion during the staff meeting activities, a range of interpretations of the concept emerged, reflecting personal experiences and realities of coping with developing inclusive practices on a day to day basis. These perspectives acknowledged not only the moral sense of duty and ‘rightness’ about including all pupils, but also identified concerns about the need to provide individualized responses to meet the needs of different pupils, and questioned the impact that including a minority of pupils with very high levels of complex needs may have upon the “silent majority” (headteacher). High emotional attachment with the issue was evidenced in the written questionnaire responses of staff members: “Some children make inclusion impossible”; “I would question the use of inclusion in some extreme instances due to the impact on the class.”

Even though a shared ethos built upon broadly inclusive values and principles could be seen to exist within each school, this did not mean that individual interpretations flavoured by personal day to day challenges and experiences did not occur. Staff members acknowledged the tensions and contradictions between some of the practical solutions that had been put into place to include pupils with high level needs, but which were at conflict with underlying inclusive values. Thus the use of ability setting; separate classes or teaching groups for those with complex learning needs; separate nurture groups for those with ASD, including separate eating areas; and the development of separate provisions for those with challenging emotional and behavioural needs, were all seen to represent the tension and paradox which emerges between on the one hand striving to include all pupils, whilst on the other hand, by including, setting up increasingly exclusive provisions and practices. Staff members acknowledged that these practices did not seem to sit comfortably with their overall philosophical understanding of

inclusion, but that they were necessary systems and processes to cope with the day to day reality of the situation. Thus, the staff within both schools were seen to be:

“filtering the policies of change through their existing professional ideologies, perspectives and identifies.” (Woods et al, 1997: 11)

When defined, inclusion was seen to be more about the notion of an inclusive schooling system, meaning an equitable and supportive education system as a whole, rather than upon individual strategies or solutions to ensure the inclusion of a particular individual within the particular school context. Tensions between the notion of inclusion, and the development of a range of specialized and exclusionary practices were therefore identified:

- “*We’ve also set up the year 3 and 4 class for 18 children with SEN, so we feel because we’re meeting their needs in the most appropriate way, although they’re not included in the other mixed ability classes, we feel that that is better for them and therefore more inclusive.*” (SENCO)
- “*We also put a lot of time into putting forward statements and supporting parents to get special school placements because again that meets those children’s needs, because we don’t necessarily see it as inclusive to have them struggling and unhappy.*” (SENCO)

Emotional attachment played a significant part of the teachers conceptualization and understanding of the term inclusion. Driven by the shared ethos and culture of values around wanting to make a difference to the pupils, teachers had to cope with the impact of intense emotional responses. At times there was the sense of “reward”, or huge “bonus” associated with meeting pupils needs; but at other times, teachers were left feeling “exhausted”; “*in a “living nightmare”*”; “unable to cope”; “*frustrated that they can’t do more to help*”.

Staff members demonstrated how on a day to day basis they could “experience an array of sometimes conflicting emotions in the classroom.” (Day et al, 2006: 612)

For these teachers, the concept of inclusion was not a simple one of identifying specific actions and strategies to implement to increase the impact of inclusive practices upon the pupils. Rather, the concept of inclusion was inextricably linked with emotional experiences and the highs and lows of day to day personal challenges in mediating the reality of inclusion within schools. This links with findings from other work around the impact of teacher identity and understanding of their role, around wanting to make a difference, and overall definition and presentation of ‘self’ (Nias, 1989; Woods et al, 1997).

Both schools, in different ways, evidenced the struggle and tensions that schools face when trying to develop inclusive practices. If we consider their approach to inclusion using Ainscow et al’s (2006) Typology of Inclusion (see Fig. 22 below) we can therefore see a complex interplay of different approaches to inclusion being prioritized at different times, by different members of staff and by the same member of staff at different times, according to circumstance and situations within the school context as a whole.

1. Inclusion as a concern with disabled students and others categorized as ‘having special educational needs’
2. Inclusion as a response to disciplinary exclusion
3. Inclusion is relation to all groups seen as vulnerable to exclusion
4. Inclusion as developing the school for all
5. Inclusion as ‘Education for All’
6. Inclusion as a principled approach to education and society.

(Ainscow et al, 2006: 15)

Fig. 22: Typology of six ways of thinking about inclusion

For both schools it could be said that the underlying culture and ethos of the school was one of seeking to develop the school for all (Typology 4). Comments both by headteachers and teachers within the schools focused upon their understanding of the importance of ensuring equitable learning experiences for all, without narrowing the focus too much upon specific categories of need. At times, this embedded ethos was linked with aspirational principles relating to Education for All and principled approaches to education and society (Typology 5 and 6), although staff members were most often focused in their discussions upon the practice that developed within their own particular context, and therefore made fewer references to the positioning of inclusion within wider societal goals.

At other times, however, despite the embedded ethos and culture built loosely around developing the school for all, a narrowing of this focus became apparent, depending upon individual circumstances (often challenging instances involving pupils with very high levels of need). The notion of inclusion as being concerned specifically with pupils with particular special educational needs (Typology 1), although not a central focus within staff members articulated principles around inclusion, did become apparent both within discussions and in observations of practice. The focus on nurture classes and groups, including the specific ASD nurture group provided examples of this.

Inclusion was also closely associated with exclusion (Typology 2 and 3), and staff members talked about developing inclusive practices as a means of moving away from situations of “containment” (headteacher) and “exclusion” (teacher), towards a practice which more fully supported pupils within the mainstream environment.

A linear movement of thinking and practice from one position (Typology 1) to another (Typology 6) was not evidenced, and should not be expected within schools. Perspectives on inclusion can and will fluctuate within a school depending upon the particular contexts at a time. This reinforces the notion that:

“The contexts of practice- the realities of particular teachers working with particular groups of children in particular schools where particular policy imperatives are at

work- are complex and contradictory. Doing the right thing may sometimes involve choices between almost equally undesirable alternatives, and the consequences of actions may be unclear and values may conflict.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 14)

Data from the accounts of these two schools would therefore suggest that simplistic definitions of inclusion, or blueprints of inclusive practice, are not possible to agree. Instead, inclusion is seen as a difficult concept to understand, and a difficult state to achieve. At times it seems to the staff members as if the concept is aspirational rather than achievable. But yet, despite the daily challenges, staff members within both schools were united by the shared, unwritten values of wanting to “make a difference”.

The centrality of emotion and inclusive school culture

One of the most striking issues to emerge through the Data Collection, Analysis and Presentation phases, was the need to extend the conceptual framework upon which the research was based away from being purely focused upon the specific actions and processes involved in developing inclusive practices, to the inclusion of another layer of analysis and theorizing around the emotional impact and feelings associated with the experience of developing inclusive practices. Through the research process it became increasingly apparent that the impact of emotion upon the development of inclusive practices and the sustainability of the school culture “cannot be ignored.” (Black-Hawkins et al, 2007: 31)

This is significant, and was not an issue that was fully anticipated at the start of the research process, where the initial focus had been much more upon providing contextualized accounts of the specific processes and actions which different schools identified as significant to the development of their inclusive practice. As a result of this new insight, the data was presented in three rather than two sections to encompass not only the contextual factors and the specific processes and actions involved, but also a new area around the emotional experience of developing inclusive practices.

This key insight to emerge from the research is an area which is largely ignored within much of the literature and policy around inclusion and developing inclusive practices, which typically continue to seek simplistic models of practice. The accounts of these two schools however, demonstrates the impact of emotion upon the ability of the school and staff members to move forward in the development of inclusive practice, and acknowledges the centrality of emotion upon the identity not only of the individual teacher but also upon the evolution of inclusive practices itself (Perryman, 2007). “Strong feelings” (James, 2009) are roused through the daily experience and practicalities of teaching and these need to be acknowledged within policy and practice which understands the impact of the wide range of “dilemmas and tensions” (Woods et al, 1997) upon teachers sense of self, self esteem and identity. As Day et al (2006) note:

“Teachers need support.... if they are to grapple with the immense emotional, intellectual and social demands and as they work towards building the internal and external relationships demanded by ongoing government reforms and social movements.” (Day et al, 2006: 614)

The embedded culture of the school, and impacting forces upon that culture also emerged as particularly significant within the context of this research. The data gathered within this research study therefore demonstrated that it is not possible to develop inclusive practices through actions, processes or practices alone. Instead, they are embedded within a complex interaction of variables. At the heart of this web of variables must be a consideration of the underlying culture within the school (Dyson et al, 2002). For inclusive practices to evolve, there must be an embedded culture which is one of shared understanding and responsibility towards inclusive values. An understanding of individual school cultures is therefore central to developing meaningful understanding of how schools develop:

“for culture is not extraneous to the school... culture both drives and is everywhere manifested in what goes on in classrooms, from what you see on the walls to what you cannot see going on inside children’s heads.” (Alexander, 2001: 9)

Data from the schools demonstrated the notion that inclusive school cultures have their own “unique rhythm, colour and pace” (Harris, 2007: 42) and that they are not fixed and static. There is therefore a need to consider and “unpack that elusive relationship between society, culture and policy on the one hand, school and classroom practice on the other” (Alexander, 2001: 7). Whilst both schools could be seen to be developing practices built upon inclusive values and principles, they were doing this in different ways, and as a result of different impacting factors upon their overall development. Within the same school, the culture could be seen to change at different times: particularly within School N through the establishment of a new headteacher with a different leadership approach, and the departure of some staff members. Developing inclusive practices therefore was not simply an issue of implementing strategies, it was seen to concern “deeper, cultural transformation” (Howes et al, 2009: 29)

If it is understood that cultures are unique to the particular setting; cannot be simplistically replicated; are dependent upon the development and evolution of variables and factors pertinent to the particular context: then there are key implications for government policy and practice in relation to the issue of developing inclusive practices.

Simplistic procedures for ‘turning schools around’ at times when they are considered to be ‘failing’ (judged through a focus on narrow performance based data) should be reconsidered, with a wider conceptualization and understanding of the implications for culture development within the school setting.

Resources to support the development of inclusive practices within the schools

A complex and dynamic interaction of key themes have been identified in relation to how staff members talked about what worked within their school setting to support the development of inclusive practices. Figure 23, below, has been developed, in discussion with strategic leaders within the school settings to illustrate the dynamic mapping and interaction of the key themes:

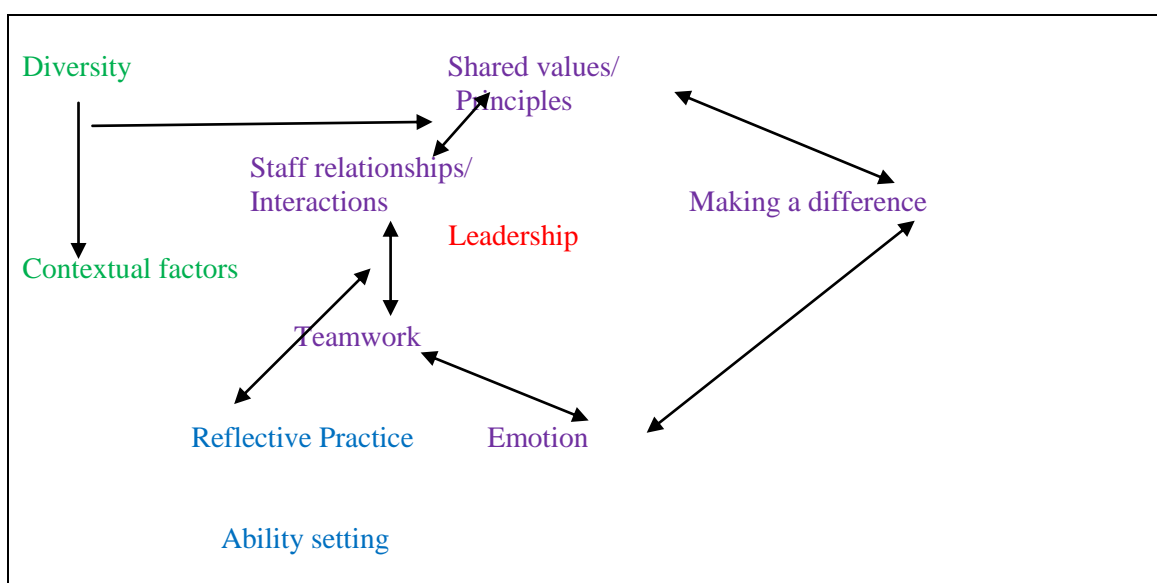


Fig. 23: Resources to support the development of inclusive practices within the schools

Contextual factors were seen as key within the staff discussions to the successful development of inclusive practices. These contextual factors were not only external factors, such as the catchment area of the school, and the impact of government policy and strategies; but were also seen to include internal factors, including the mobility of staff and pupils, the cultural diversity of pupils, staff relationships and the length and style of leadership within the school setting. Contextual factors were seen to impact significantly upon the building of the culture and ethos within the school, and the embedded culture was seen to be the foundation upon which policy and practice could be built. This reflects the dimensions model developed by Booth & Ainscow (2002), below:

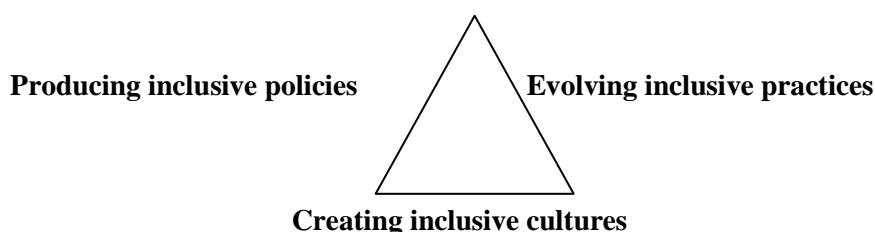


Fig. 24: Index for Inclusion Dimensions

Within both school contexts was an acknowledgement of the challenges of the particularly socially deprived contexts in which the schools were situated. It was understood that pupils came from a range of backgrounds, from both socially deprived social housing and from privately owned professional homes, and that whilst some came from more stable and secure families, others came from troubled and disaffected backgrounds. Stereotypes about groups of pupils were avoided where possible, with teachers acknowledging that the individual needs and circumstances of each individual needed to be explored and understood, rather than generalized assumptions about family ‘types’: “some people have a misconception that actually because *they come from a poor background then obviously they’re going to be below average, when actually that’s not the case at all*” (teacher). Teachers understood that pupils from all different backgrounds could be vulnerable and in need of support for a variety of reasons.

This is significant, and can be seen as a central principle within developing inclusive values from which to build whole school inclusive practices. Teachers need to value the individual strengths and needs of each pupil rather than stereotype need types and groups of pupils (Ekins & Grimes, 2009). At times this is a complex issue, and despite the underlying understanding, day to day realities and practices may revert to stereotypical notions of need, for example with the ASD specific nurture group to meet the predetermined needs of all pupils with ASD. Tensions could be seen to exist, and demonstrated the importance of reflective staff groups who continually challenge taken for granted assumptions and historical practices: to continue to re-evaluate the effectiveness of these practices within an overall whole school ethos and culture of inclusive practices.

Whilst it was noted that many pupils came from very different home backgrounds, either culturally diverse, in relation to many pupils coming from Nepal, for example; or different in terms of deprivation and the “horrific” (teacher) homes that some pupils came from, this diversity was not always seen as a negative factor. Rather, the positive element of this diversity was seen to be crucial to the development of an inclusive culture and ethos within the school settings, and reflects Kugelmass’ observation that the inclusive school that she was studying was:

“held together by a deep appreciation for diversity in all aspects of life and an unconditional love of children.” (Kugelmass, 2004: 13)

This could be said to be the foundation of the culture observed within the two schools. Diversity, rather than being seen to be a negative impact upon the school, was seen to be a positive benefit. Teachers in both schools talked with emotion and respect about the pupils with whom they worked, emphasizing the nurturing and caring aspects of their role.

Diversity may therefore be, if not a prerequisite, then possibly a supporter of inclusive practices and principles. Those schools working in the most challenging and diverse situations, develop practices which, although may not always meet narrow standards focused criteria for excellence, may demonstrate high commitments to inclusive values and principles (MacBeath et al, 2007).

Thus the context and diversity of the schools was seen to directly impact upon how values and principles within the school evolved. Data from the staff members noted that a certain ‘type’ of person chose to work in challenging contexts such as those in which both schools were situated: the “School S type of teacher” (headteacher), and that there were staff members who quickly moved on as they found the challenges of the school too much.

The data shows that it is not so much the development of individual practices and processes which impacts positively upon the potential to respond to a range of challenging, complex and diverse needs in an inclusive way. Rather, it is the support of colleagues with shared principles and values. Staff members found it comforting to position themselves alongside colleagues with shared the same principles and values: “*I can’t think of anybody, any teacher who has not got that attitude at this school*” (teacher).

Staff members were encouraged to share and be “open with their values and vision” (headteacher), and at key times there was a whole school focus upon developing shared school visions, expectations and codes of conduct (for example during the transition to a new head within School N.)

Whilst individual perspectives and values were therefore largely assimilated into a shared vision and set of values which underpinned the culture and ethos of the school as a whole, it was understood that these shared values could not encompass all of the varying perspectives on inclusion held by the individual members of staff all of the time. Instead, they were seen to provide the foundation upon which practices could evolve and develop. The experience of the schools demonstrated that, although:

“the consensus may not be total and may not necessarily remove all tensions or contradictions in practice. [However] there is likely to be a high level of staff collaboration and joint problem-solving.” (Dyson et al, 2002: 56)

This was seen to be the case, as staff members were encouraged to not only share their own values but also to “challenge each other to justify their point of view” (headteacher). In School S, the approach used within observed staff meetings demonstrated that staff members were used to an open, informal and challenging reflective practice within their work lives. Opinions, thoughts and comments were openly shared and critiqued to support all members of staff to make more sense of the issues, and to develop their shared understanding of how to develop and improve whole school approaches. Such an approach will support the development of problem

solving communities of practice seen to be so central within inclusive school cultures (Kugelmass, 2004: Ainscow et al, 2006). Opportunities to engage in reflective and shared problem solving activities with colleagues were therefore seen to be key both to enabling the development of inclusive practices, and in the strengthening of staff relationships. A shared staff culture emerged which reinforced the:

“shared identification and definition of problems, joint problem solving and sharing of ideas, and mutual support and mentoring.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 104)

Also central to enabling the school cultures to progress towards the negotiation and agreement of basic inclusive principles which could support the embedded culture of the school was an embedded commitment to professional dialogue. Staff members generally identified times of greatest stress and difficulty not by significant changes or challenges, but when there was a feeling of lack of connectivity between individual values, and communication and shared negotiation of them within the school setting.

At times all staff members would experience emotions and feelings about inclusion and developing inclusive practices which would fall outside the whole school values, and this was also most noticeable at times of stress when the individual experiences of particular staff members to challenging situations caused them to question the underlying inclusive values and principles. Comments about when the situation was “horrendous”; or about the equity of experience for other pupils affected by the individual actions and behaviours of a minority evidence the tension which exists.

What emerged, however, was a demonstration of the importance of the underlying culture and values to mediate and balance the range of every day challenges and tensions which staff members experienced. The staff members:

“recognized how a shared belief system, supported by caring for one another, was essential for living and working with irresolvable dilemmas.” (Kugelmass, 2004: 122)

Staff members expressed how they felt “safe” to admit that they did not know how to cope with a particular situation or need, without feeling embarrassed and without fear of being put down. They acknowledged the supportive problem solving ethos that had been created with an emphasis upon shared responsibility throughout the school and upon supportive interactions. This links in with the notion that teachers look to their colleagues for support in a number of different roles, including as: “*models, as ‘professional parents’, to provide ideas, information and practical help, for emotional support and for friendship.*” (Nias, 1989: 135)

Throughout both schools there was an implicit understanding and respect for the development of mutually supportive relationships with colleagues. It was seen to be important that there was

a notion of shared responsibility, and an ethos within which it was accepted that you may not always have the answer. Staff members therefore appreciated working in a culture in which:

“ ‘sharing’ is the norm and individuals do not feel ashamed to admit failure or a sense of inadequacy.” (Nias, 1989: 152)

Staff members therefore emphasized the fact that:

“we work very much as a team and we’re very supportive of each other and there’s that sort of friendship as well as colleagues. A great deal of respect for each other.” (SENCO)

The overlap between professional support and personal/ social respect was noted, evidenced through the: “relaxed nature of their daily interactions and through the warmth with which they spoke of each other.” (Nias, 1992: 6)

Data gathered from both school settings therefore emphasized the “informal relationships and out of school social activities” (fieldnotes) reinforcing the notion that:

“what’s really good is that we all go out and socialize together. I think it’s really good that we do that, we’ve bonded together, and in the staffroom the atmosphere is really light and everyone is laughing and joking. You have got to have that” (SENCO).

Strong staff relationships within a culture of collaboration and shared responsibility were seen to support teachers through the everyday challenges and to help to:

“sustain the momentum of change through the inevitable ups and downs of school life that otherwise sap the energy and commitment of staff and contribute to the ‘plateau’ effect.” (Harris, 2007: 21)

It is this depth of feeling and motivation which does need to be acknowledged and celebrated when considering the complex notion of developing inclusive practices. It was not through the implementation of a narrow intervention or curriculum approach that these teachers succeeded in working day after day with the range of challenging needs and situations within their school setting. Rather, it was their internal motivation and desire to ‘make a difference’ (Hargreaves’ (1999) ‘psychic rewards’) which they then saw reflected in the shared values, principles and ethos of the school as a whole, which enabled them to keep going and work through the difficult times. Staff emphasized the fact that it was the overall school culture, closely linked to their internal values and commitments to pupils which enabled them to cope with the challenges of the practical realities of developing inclusive practices. This would suggest that it may be difficult for an individual to continue to sustain this internal motivation and desire to ‘make a difference’ without the support of the whole school ethos, values and principles. Individuals are seen to consciously seek out settings with embedded cultures and practices which positively reflect their internal value systems. Staff therefore commented that what attracted them to the school was:

“the ethos of the school. The friendliness of the staff, really welcoming... and also people’s attitudes with the children. The children are here primarily for love and care.” (teacher)

This has implications for school development priorities, and also for the support offered to schools from advisors, OFSTED or the DCSF. The focus of support should not be centred solely upon how to implement new initiatives, actions and processes to meet the changing needs of pupil groups, but should instead include a consideration of how the staff team is enabled to develop effectively so that reflective practice, team problem solving and shared responsibility become key features of a whole school approach to developing inclusive practices. The emotional and interactive aspect of school development, culture and provision is therefore emphasized (Hargreaves, 1999) and cannot be ignored within attempts to understand the complexity of developing cultures which can support the development of inclusive practices. The inter-connectivity of shared values, inclusive school cultures and staff relationships is demonstrated through the data, and is characterized by ever changing conflicts, tensions and values which are mediated and balanced through supportive and inclusive relationships with colleagues.

Widespread ‘reculturing’ (Woods et al, 1997) is required within schools to support the development of inclusive school cultures. However, this cannot be achieved through a top down centralized programme of imposed reforms. Instead, the data from the schools demonstrates that systems which support schools to promote teacher collaboration, reflection, innovation and problem solving are needed.

Within the context of the data collected, leadership also emerged as a key theme impacting upon the potential development of inclusive practices. This is acknowledged by Dyson et al (2002) who note that:

“Schools with ‘inclusive cultures’ are also likely to be characterized by the presence of leaders who are committed to inclusive values and to a leadership style which encourages a range of individuals to participate in leadership functions.” (Dyson et al, 2002: 56)

Staff members naturally spent some time commenting upon this aspect, and it was seen to have high significance for how inclusive practices have been enabled and supported to develop within both school contexts.

For School N, this was in the context of a new headteacher having taken up the position with a very different leadership style to that of the previous headteacher. Within School S the leadership within the school had been more stable, but had evolved, and discussions focused upon the impact of the development, for example, of more delegation of responsibilities, upon the developing expertise and shared responsibility of all staff members.

Within both schools school culture and ethos, which was seen as fundamental to development and change within schools, including the development of inclusive practices were seen to be

intricately linked with the approach, values and personality of the leader/ headteacher within the school.

Whilst the development of an inclusive school culture is strongly linked to the negotiation of shared values, it therefore also clearly needs to be supported by “a deep ideological commitment to inclusion by the person holding positional leadership [as headteacher].” (Kugelmass, 2004: 126)

This notion is reinforced by the headteachers of the two schools who both saw themselves as key to the development and particular direction of the culture within their schools:

“I think that a lot of the dialogue about making a difference with these children, looking out for these children, accepting their home difficulties, this comes from myself [and my deputy head].” (headteacher)

Staff also naturally positioned themselves and their values in alignment with those of the both the headteacher and other colleagues:

“I can’t think of anybody, any teacher who has not got that attitude at this school.” (teacher)

Staff members discussed the complex nature of the appropriateness of different models of leadership approach. At times it was noted that the leadership style was “too relaxed and friendly” (teacher) and that a more direct instructive style was required; although at other times it was noted that a more distributed form of leadership approach with delegation of responsibilities and an extension of skills and expertise within different individuals was required. There is therefore:

“no linear application of policy into practice, but a complicated process involving schools and/ or heads’ values (ethos), the heads’ gatekeeping and chosen style of leadership.” (Woods et al, 1997: 118)

Approaches to leadership need to be situated and contextualized, rather than prescribed through formulaic models of leadership roles.

Whilst both schools could be seen to be engaging in reflective thinking tensions continued to exist. Some aspects of practice seemed to have become taken for granted within the general school approach. Issues such as ability setting (including the introduction of a nurture class in School N) and the establishment of specific nurture groups (eg for pupils with ASD in School S; and for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs in School N), were celebrated as resources to support the development of inclusive practices within both schools. On the surface, this is how they must be viewed: evidence from discussions with the staff members, and from SEF and OFSTED Reports demonstrates that they have been set up to meet the needs of all pupils, and that by providing such systems, an increasing range of pupils were more fully able to learn and be included within the mainstream school setting. Staff therefore note that such provisions have

helped the schools to move away from the “containment” (headteacher) of pupils, into a system which supports their complex learning, emotional and behavioural needs.

Both schools can therefore clearly be seen to be implementing selective grouping strategies in efforts to mediate both inclusion and standards focused agendas. However, there was some individual reflection about the tension which exists between underlying inclusive ethos of the school and such historically exclusive and segregationary practices:

“The ability setting *is not perhaps an ideal, it’s more a practicality, but that feeds into the ideal in another way.*” (headteacher)

The systems had become embedded within the contexts of the school: they were not openly challenged, and had become taken for granted and often historically influenced practices: “we have always done it this way” (teacher); “the children accept it because this is what we have always done” (teacher).

However, these practices are not consistent with the overall ethos and principles of the schools. Ability setting and specific withdrawn interventions in fact may cause exclusionary practices to develop. Although during discussions many staff members could recognize the conflict and tension which exists between the general inclusive principles and values embedded within the school, this was not openly challenged and discussed. As Ainscow et al (2006) note, sometimes:

“Schools are constrained to adopt an approach to achievement within the standards agenda that can pressurize them to narrow the curriculum and deflect from a broader understanding of achievement. This can lead them to adopt selective grouping strategies against their better judgement.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 86)

Whilst reflective practices did exist, and were used to effectively support the development of new approaches and practices within the school, there is evidence (through the example of ability setting and nurture groups) of accepted practices being allowed to remain unquestioned and unchallenged. The full potential of reflection within the school, to explore and expose those conflicts and tensions which exist within everyday practice and systems has not been utilized. Ability setting, and the development of specific nurture groups has become a taken for granted approach to meeting complex needs, and although there was evidence of staff members recognizing the conflict, there was no evidence of them actually thinking about or proposing alternatives to the accepted situation. What is needed, therefore, is an approach to reflection within schools which helps to “make the familiar unfamiliar” (Delamont, 2002), exposes tensions and conflicts which exist within everyday teaching approaches and practices within the school, and supports the staff members to consider different, innovative approaches to meeting those needs.

Barriers, challenges and tensions

A number of barriers, challenges and tensions in the development of inclusive practices within both schools could also be identified. Again, the inter-relationship between them and the way that they impact upon the staff members is problematic and complex, as depicted within Figure 25:

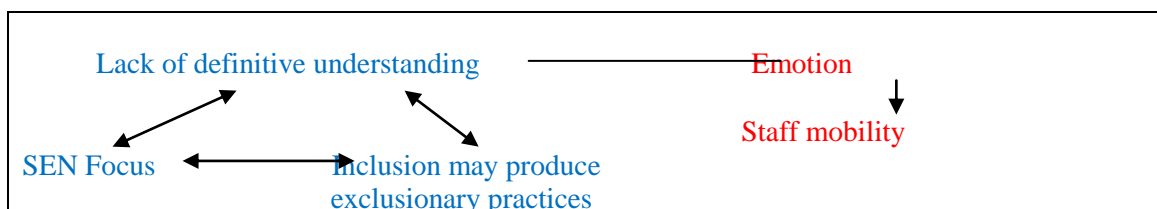


Fig. 25: Barriers, challenges and tensions impacting upon the development of inclusive practices within the schools

One of the tensions which exist in relation to developing inclusive practices is the impact of trying to respond inclusively to diverse needs which may be seen to require individualized or segregationary practices. Staff members within both schools therefore identified the oxymoron that inclusion may actually produce exclusionary practices. The tension between their drive to develop inclusive practices to meet the needs of pupils with complex needs, and the reality that by doing so, increasingly individualized, withdrawn and exclusive practices needed to be developed was acknowledged. The development of the nurture class and the Sunshine Room in School N; and the specific ASD provisions and individual withdrawn support for specific pupils in School S were therefore seen to be problematic to the staff, with many of them questioning the “reality” (teacher) of inclusion:

“it is one of those questions that we ask- is it actually inclusion when they have to be removed from class *so much to have specialist input because they can’t even access the differentiated provision at their level- they are so much lower*” (SENCO)

The issue was also seen to be apparent during less structured times of the school day, affecting individuals social interaction as well as their ability to learn:

“You often see that those children don’t play, don’t have real friendships in the playground either, so it’s almost exclusion by inclusion” (SENCO).

Yet, staff considered that these were necessary practices to enable the inclusion of particular pupils within a general educational context which prioritized the raising of standards. Such provisions and practices were therefore seen to not only meet the individual needs of the particular pupils, but also to reduce the impact of those needs upon other pupils within the class or cohort group, with the inextricable links that such disruption may cause upon standards and levels of attainment.

Tensions therefore clearly exist between the desire to move forward to include pupils effectively in an appropriate and relevant learning experience: moving from ‘containment’ to ‘inclusion’; and the impact of external pressures to raise standards.

Another barrier to emerge through the accounts of the two schools was the narrowing of focus from inclusive practices to SEN practices. This could be seen both in relation to high level learning needs, and also to complex emotional and behavioural difficulties. Although through the diverse catchment area of both schools, staff members acknowledged the range of different issues impacting upon the development of inclusive practices, including impact of home environment, including socio-economic deprivation; cultural background; English as an Additional Language, yet when asked to consider specific actions and processes to support inclusion, or barriers to inclusion, discussions narrowed to a reductionist view of SEN, and particularly the impact of challenging behaviour upon teaching and learning, linking with Typology 1 presented within the Ainscow et al (2006) Typology of Inclusion.

This is a common view (MacBeath et al, 2006; NASUWT, 2008), and can be seen as a fundamental barrier to the conceptualization and realization of inclusive practices within schools today. Whilst the focus of discussions continues to rest upon a narrow view of the difficulties of meeting the needs of pupils with high level SEN needs, the issue of developing inclusive practices will always be problematic. More distance needs to be placed between the fields of Inclusion and SEN to enable the positive and beneficial impacts of inclusion to be more fully acknowledged and recognized (Petrou et al, 2009; Slee & Allan, 2001).

Whilst emotion could be seen as a resource to support staff groups to unite with shared values and a shared sense of moral purpose, it could also be seen as a barrier to the effective development of inclusive practices. The issue was therefore highly problematic and complex.

One of the more startling issues to emerge from the data was the extent of highly charged emotional feeling towards the day to day reality of meeting the needs of a wide range of pupils, within the constraints and competing forces of inclusion and imposed standards agendas. Views and understandings of inclusion expressed by the staff members reflect their day to day experiences of coping with some of the more challenging aspects of developing inclusive practices, at times impacting upon the staff members’ ability to view inclusion in fully positive terms. As Harris (2007) notes:

“Schools are powerhouses of emotion as individuals engage with each other, with *learning, with their values.... They are also minefields of disappointment, envy, fear, anguish, depression, humiliation, grief and guilt.*” (Harris, 2007: 3)

The views of inclusion expressed by the staff members in the schools are complex, with staff members at times moving between the expression of extreme emotions and feelings although

staff within both schools largely remained resilient and committed to the development of inclusive practices to meet the needs of their pupils. As Hargreaves (1999) notes, this occurs because teachers largely filter change and challenging demands through their feelings for their pupils:

“the purposes or goals that teachers had for pupils, and the emotional bonds or relationships that teachers established with them, underpinned virtually everything else teachers did.” (Hargreaves, 1999: 89)

However, the impact of the emotional turbulence of continually moving between extremes of emotional states must not be underestimated. Indeed, the cost of it could be evidenced within the recent high levels of staff turnover and mobility within School N, where the expression of these shifts in emotional state by the same teacher from “horrendous” and “catastrophic destruction” to “rewarding” could most clearly be seen.

As a result of the emotional intensity of their role and relationships with pupils, staff members within the schools at times questioned the nature of their role as a teacher in meeting the complex needs (particularly emotional and behavioural) of a range of pupils. Staff members therefore noted that:

“we are not just their teachers, we are their aunts and their uncles, and this is exactly how I view these children.” (teacher)

“It’s that kind of bizarre role as a teacher that, OK, I’m an educator, but we’re all here doing the job of a child psychologist and everything else that we are not really qualified to do.” (teacher)

Such reflections link closely with literature and research which has found that as a result of teachers finding that they are increasingly having to deal with the impact of high levels of social disruption, they now question and reposition their role and identity away from just being ‘educators’, to now becoming:

“in the words of one New Zealand practitioner ‘counsellors, social workers, nurses’, and in an Australian teacher’s ‘bouncer, child counselor, animal trainer, army sergeant, school nurse, megaphone (not the operator, the actual machine)’.” (Scott et al, 2001: 7)

The emotional burden of such role responsibilities upon individual teachers, even when working within school settings supported by underlying inclusive cultures, cannot be underestimated. For some, this can lead teachers to question the positioning of teaching within such challenging contexts:

“I just sit there going there’s more to life than this, you know, you don’t have to teach in a school like this.... I think I’m going to give it one more year. I think for my own sanity maybe I need to get out.” (teacher)

For others, however, the emotional intensity, whilst exhausting and challenging remains a central drive within their own persona and identity:

“When you hear the stories of these children, it just gets under your skin and you can’t let go.” (headteacher)

The affective experience of developing inclusive practices is largely ignored within literature and policy (Hargreaves, 1999; Woods et al, 1997; Day et al, 2006) but yet emerges as extremely powerful within the accounts of both schools, impacting directly upon concrete processes and structures within the school: eg staff mobility.

Staff mobility was seen as a key barrier to the development of inclusive practices within School N, which could be seen to have been caught in a vicious cycle of high levels of staff mobility, causing lack of team culture and identity, leading to staff feeling unsupported and alone to face the challenges of meeting the needs of diverse pupils, resulting in staff sickness and mobility. Within School S, the reverse could be seen: staff mobility was low, with many members of staff having remained in the school for a significant number of years, and this stability of staff members was seen to be a critical factor in the development of the shared ethos and culture within the school: evidenced within the informal and friendly staff social interactions with each, and shared responsibility and collaborative problem solving towards challenges with teaching and learning practices throughout the school.

Issues relating to the affective and emotional experience of developing inclusive practices within school, the links to underlying culture and collaborative working practices and the potential impact of these upon issues such as staff mobility are significant. Understanding and acknowledging the importance of these upon a schools ability to move forward with the development of inclusive practices demonstrates a move away from traditional simplistic notions of school development and improvement based upon narrow models of implementing specific practices and processes in a prescribed manner. More attention must be paid to the need for school staff groups to evolve and build their own culture and ethos, which will require a longer term emphasis upon process and journey, rather than destination and quickly achieved outcomes.

One of the main barriers in developing inclusive practices that was identified by the staff members through their discussions, was the lack of clear understanding of the term being provided through government policy. The impact of competing policy drives was identified, and this was seen to work against their ability to fully develop and extend a range of inclusive practices. The staff members could be seen to be trying to respond inclusively, within a system and context where there is confusion and conflicting messages about exactly what inclusion is and should be. Whilst the staff largely seemed to share inclusive values and principles, and together use these to develop inclusive practices within their schools, yet the data presents a

complex picture of teachers having to mediate between their inclusive values and the needs of their pupils, and other government policies: most significantly, the impact of having to raise standards within the school year on year. Staff saw these as competing initiatives which “make a mockery of the idea of inclusion” (teacher), despite evidence to suggest that inclusion and standards agendas do not need to be mutually exclusive (Black-Hawkins et al, 2007).

Staff members often linked their complex feelings about the lack of clear leadership through government policy in relation to inclusion, with more narrowly focused criticisms about the lack of support and resources provided to be able to develop inclusive practices. This supports findings from other studies, including Scott et al (2001) and MacBeath et al (2006). The arguments often focused upon the fact that they felt ‘under resourced’ to cope with an inclusion agenda: under resourced in terms of training provided; adult support; specialized professional support; special school provision and money within the school.

“I think we are left to struggle quite a bit.... Because of limited funding or limited places in specialist schools and referral units, unfortunately I don’t think that they can always give us the support that should be there.” (SENCO)

Whilst some of these practical elements certainly do impact upon the potential for schools to develop inclusive practices, there is the risk that it becomes all too easy to blame the lack of resources for the under development of effective practices which will meet the needs of all pupils. Such arguments take the focus of attention away from the values and principles behind discussions about inclusive education, which should be at the core of discussions about how the education system is being adapted to meet the complex and changing needs of a multicultural and diverse society within the 21st Century. This study has demonstrated that inclusive practices are built upon values and a principled approach to removing barriers to learning for all pupils (Ainscow et al, 2006). They are not based upon the technical implementation of costly interventions or provisions. Discussions blaming lack of resources for the failure to develop inclusive practices therefore fail to fully grasp this important notion.

A new way forward...

Whilst the difficulty of developing inclusive practices within a system with so many competing priorities and conflicting agendas for practitioners does need to be acknowledged and addressed, particularly through government policy, there is the risk, if a universal government perspective on inclusion were to be developed, that this would be reductionist and too simplistic to meet the needs of differing settings. Developing inclusive practices is a complex and individual journey: it is not something that can be scripted through a narrow blueprint of practices to follow. It is dependent upon an ever changing range of complex variables, both internal and external to the school setting itself. Thus, as Dyson & Gallannaugh (2007) note:

“whilst inclusion could be defined in general terms, it could only take on specific meaning in particular school contexts.” (Dyson & Gallannaugh, 2007: 477)

Whilst there is a call for more clarification regarding the position of inclusion within government policy and education systems today, a note of caution needs to be raised. Even if a clear policy and model of developing inclusive practices was provided by the government, and then supported by appropriate resources (in terms of support to develop teacher collaboration, reflective practice and inclusive school cultures); even then this would not necessarily produce an inclusive learning experience for every pupil. School settings are complex social institutions: each having to respond to the diverse and individual needs of the pupils and families that it supports and works with. Within the culturally and socio-economically diverse society within which we now find ourselves, simple blueprints of practice, or even definitions of inclusion may not respond fully to all individuals or school settings. What is laid out as inclusion, may indeed provoke exclusionary practices for some pupils within different situations. What is needed therefore, is a system which, whilst emphasizing the general principles and values behind inclusive practices, also recognizes the individual nature of inclusive school development and provides a flexible system of resource allocation to meet those differing needs: an approach which positions inclusion not:

“as a separate policy but rather as a principle, emerging out of a more fundamental set of values, that informs all policies and actions.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 178)

This general principle may be as broad as the over arching principles put forward by Booth & Ainscow (2002) to:

- Reduce barriers to learning,
- Increase participation and access to learning, and to
- Support diversity

Within such a broad framework, there is still the possibility for schools to work towards inclusive practices which are relevant and appropriate to meeting those principles within the context of their setting and the needs of the pupils and families with whom they are working.

Data from the accounts of the two schools supports the development of a model within which these central principles should be understood in relation to a range of different variables, which emphasise the unique and individual development of the particular practices developed to meet the general principles. Figure 26 therefore presents a model which builds upon the dimensions model of Booth & Ainscow (2002) to more fully reflect the complex interaction of variables upon the development of appropriate and relevant inclusive practices within individual school settings. The key concepts of culture and emotion are centrally positioned within the model to highlight the importance of the affective nature not only of discussions about inclusion, but also of school change and development more widely.

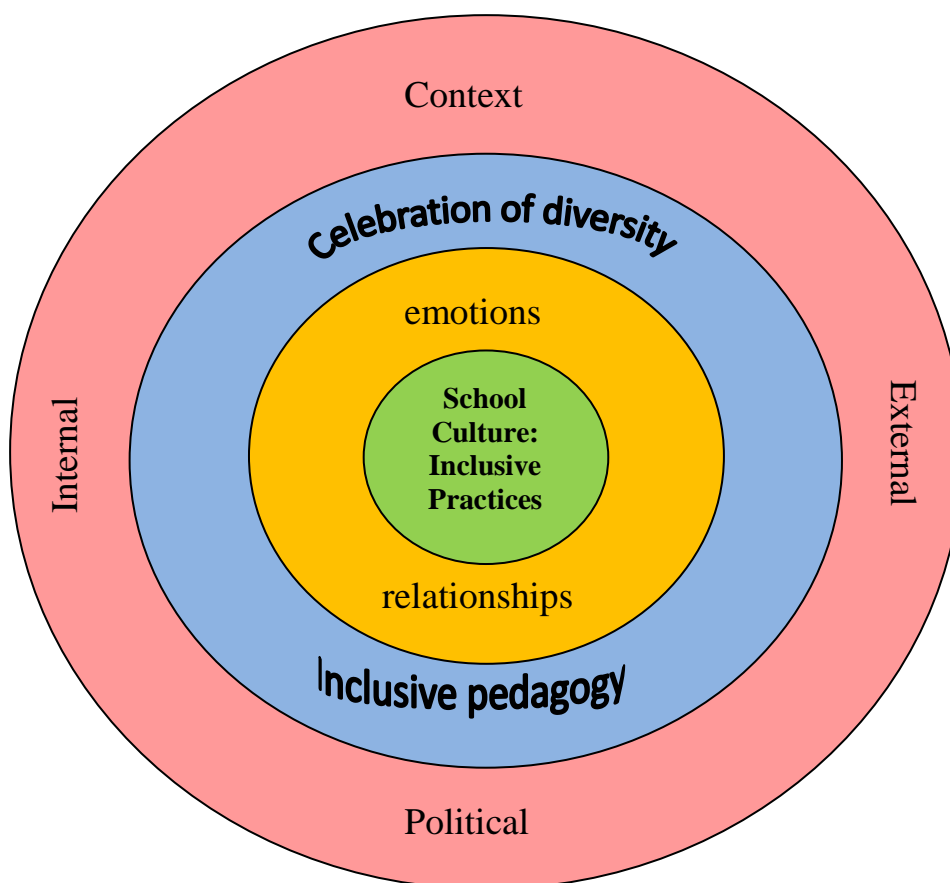


Fig. 26: Understanding the development of inclusive practices in schools

The model is not a simplistic checklist of actions and processes, nor a prescriptive model of development, instead it is a broad framework for rethinking existing tensions in order for individual schools and settings to consider new ways forward. It is important to understand that change of this type is not simply about changing structures and processes. Rather, it is about deep cultural change (Howes et al, 2009) and widespread ‘reculturing’ (Woods et al, 1997) which can only occur when there is a shift in values and understanding in relation to the notion of inclusive education, and the position of inclusion within society.

The importance of the underlying culture within the school is emphasised, and placed at the heart of the model. This is seen to have the greatest impact upon the potential development of inclusive practices, and cannot be simply prescribed or transplanted from other examples of practice, or from checklists of procedures. Recognition of the centrality of ‘interpretation’ of broad inclusive principles within different contexts producing different solutions and approaches is emphasised (Ainscow et al, 2006; West et al, 2005)

Culture is intricately linked with the emotions and relationships developed within the school, and these will be impacted upon not only by changes within the school itself (staff mobility,

changes in leadership, pupil changes) but also by changes in personal situations linked to individual staff members. In this it must be recognised that:

“the feelings and energy levels of headteachers and staff rise and fall, following the dictates of their personal lives as well as events at school.” (Nias et al, 1989: 124)

This aspect needs to be fully acknowledged as it demonstrates that change, development and the implementation of policy cannot be dictated in a mechanical way. It will always be filtered through the complex and unpredictable nature of staff emotion and relationships. As with culture, emotions and relationships cannot be easily prescribed through narrow checklists of how staff members should behave and interact with each other. Emotions and relationships are individual, complex and dependent upon a range of variables and factors which cannot be structured and organised within the school context.

Around these complex factors which have emerged from the data, is a further layer of complexity which is seen to be about staff members celebration of diversity, and understanding of different learning styles in an inclusive rather than a stereotyped way. Data from the schools therefore demonstrated that as a result of being in schools with high levels of diversity, the staff members considered that they were more accepting of that diversity, more problem solving and creative in their approaches to teaching and learning styles and more skilled at looking at individual needs rather than stereotyped needs. Indeed, in discussions about adapting and differentiating to remove barriers to learning for individuals, one teacher noted:

“I do that very naturally. I get to *the point where I don't even realise I'm doing it!*”
(teacher)

Diversity is seen to be a positive enabling feature within their school settings, rather than a barrier or limiting factor, and this belief contributes to the particular culture and ethos of the school. Inclusive pedagogy, including reflection and collaborative problem solving, is therefore also seen as key to the development of inclusive practices (Alexander, 2001; Kugelmass, 2004).

In the outer layer of the model is acknowledgement of the individual context of the school setting: that schools will all look very different and be at different stages of their particular development due to a range of complex and inter-linked contextual factors. Again, these contextual factors cannot always be planned and organised. They will include the impact of political and governmental agendas, internal and external factors. The model recognises that centralised policies cannot understand the complex dynamic of the individual school setting, and the impact that that policy may have upon developing practices and cultures within the school setting. For some schools, a particular policy may reinforce and add support to principles and values already embedded within the school, and thus be a positive factor. For other schools,

that same policy may be in tension and conflict with the underlying system of working and embedded principles and ethos within the school setting. It will only be those “on the ground” who will be able to start to understand the complex relationship between centralised external policy and contextual factors, and the internal ethos and culture (Stables, 2009).

It is hoped that this model, taken with the broad principles of inclusive practice will help to highlight the complexity of the issue of developing inclusive practices within the school setting, and will help to reinforce the individual nature of inclusive school development and the centrality of underlying culture and ethos which cannot be prescribed.

Chapter 7: Concluding Comments:

The initial aim of the research study was to consider in more detail the actual interpretation of inclusion within schools, and to see how this interpretation matched government policy, research and literature; whether it was shaped by contextual factors and how it was prioritized through the development of specific actions and systems. What has emerged, however, is a much more situated and complex account of a wide range of different variables interacting with each other (sometimes in tension, but often in support) to produce a culture and ethos which promotes inclusive thinking and practices.

Within the model of identified resources, there is little mention of any specific actions and processes (other than the problematic ability setting and use of specific nurture groups to support pupil needs). Rather, the resources identify the range of emotion and relationship driven variables which within the context of these two schools have emerged as central to their ability to develop inclusive practices. Change therefore “cannot be brought about by the mechanistic application of discrete measures.” (Wrigley, 2006: 276)

This study reinforces the centrality of emotional experience upon differing perspectives on inclusion. It emphasizes the importance of culture and ethos within the school as a whole, and how this is both impacted by, and in turn impacts upon leadership, staff relationships, shared values and principles. The study demonstrates that policy which focuses simply upon reductionist ‘recipes’ and blueprints of practice:

“underestimate the social nature of the way practice evolves in particular schools, in particular contexts and at particular times.” (West et al, 2005: 80)

The data has also highlighted tensions which can easily be perpetuated within school systems, if day to day practices and approaches are not regularly scrutinized, challenged and questioned through supportive and problem solving reflective practices. For resources to be developed to support schools to engage with developing inclusive practices, there needs to be further acknowledgement of the notion that:

“If we accept that changing practice and challenging embedded assumptions entails more than technical change, then that means acknowledging teachers as people first, embedded in a network of relationships at work, with individual and shared concerns, commitments, hopes and fears.” (Howes et al, 2009: 30)

Policy agendas such as the inclusion agenda therefore need to be understood in terms of how they are socially reconstructed and interpreted within a particular cultural context (school setting) and within that culture, by individuals mediating the policy objectives through their own value systems. It is too simplistic to consider that policy, particularly something as complex and emotive as inclusive principles can simply be handed down from on top to those in schools who then deliver it in a uniform way (Troman, 1999).

Schools are ever changing and complex social settings, as evidenced within the different perspectives and approaches to inclusion demonstrated within the same school over different periods of time. Changes are emotionally felt, not objectively dealt with through the mechanistic application of strategy or policy (Nias et al, 1989).

Inclusion and developing inclusive practices remain complex and controversial terms, open to interpretation and a wide variety of different perspectives.

The confusion which exists in relation to its use and meaning within government policy can be seen to be a barrier to the effective development and promotion of inclusive practices and principles within all schools.

Yet, the issue is not so simple. What has emerged through this study is the importance of a situated and localized understanding of inclusion. Inclusive practices must be developed in response to needs as they emerge within a given context: they cannot be imposed from above, or presented as a simplistic checklist or blueprint of practice. Definitions of inclusion and inclusive practice will therefore look different at different times in different schools and settings. The importance of the development of a robust individual school ethos and culture built upon shared and continually re-negotiated inclusive principles and values must therefore be emphasised. Becoming 'more inclusive' must therefore be seen not as a mechanical implementation of particular strategies but instead in terms of:

“thinking and talking, reviewing and refining practice, and making attempts to develop a more inclusive culture.” (Ainscow et al, 2006: 139)

Inclusion depends upon a focus on “principled interruptions” (Ainscow et al, 2006) where staff members are supported to come together in reflection and collaborative problem solving to challenge existing practices and taken for granted assumptions.

One area which continues to emerge as problematic, is the perpetuation of links between SEN and Inclusion. For inclusive practices to evolve more effectively to respond to and meet the needs of all pupils, and for there to be a better understanding of the individual ever-changing needs of pupils, there does need to be a shift in understanding which supports a definition of inclusion which is not inextricably linked with SEN and SEN practices. For this to occur, there may be the need for new terminology to evolve, as the term inclusion continues to perpetuate traditional thinking around the inclusion/ integration/ placement of pupils with high levels of SEN within mainstream school settings (Petrou, 2009; Slee & Allan, 2001).

A clearer understanding and recognition of the distinction between SEN practices and inclusive practices within government policy; and a focus on supporting and celebrating schools in which inclusive practices are developed in innovative ways, may help practitioners to feel more

confident in pursuing the development of inclusive practices as a viable and recognized pursuit within the education system.

Inclusion and inclusive practices should be about ensuring equality of opportunity, participation and access of all to a range of stimulating, appropriate and relevant learning experiences. It is about proactively removing barriers, whatever they may be, and not just in terms of learning needs.

This study, and the model presented above (Figure 26), has emphasised the need to move away from simplistic research methodologies and approaches to developing narrow checklists of the 'effective inclusive' school. The issue is complex, and a narrow focus upon outcomes and specific actions and processes involved in school development and the development of inclusive practices does little to enhance our understanding of how individual schools can be supported to develop their own practices to respond to the particular needs of their pupil group.

Through this study, a particular methodological approach has been taken which has purposefully moved away from simplistic evaluative judgements, comparisons and generalisations about practice. Instead, the research methodology has been developed to enable the staff members own accounts and interpretations of the experience of developing inclusive practices to emerge. The account from each school has been presented individually to emphasise the unique nature of each schools journey and development. As a result of this approach to the methodology, new understanding not previously anticipated was gained. The significant impact of emotion, culture and staff relationships upon the development of practices within schools has emerged as a key feature. The understandings gained through this research should therefore help to inform the future development of policy, research and practice through encouraging others to move away from traditional and reductionist blueprints of outcomes and processes, and into a deeper understanding of the complexity of individual human variables which impact upon potential school development, particularly in relation to the development of inclusive cultures, practices and policies (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

This is a snapshot of these two schools at a particular period in time. It is understood that the schools will be in a different position now: practices will have evolved, changed and developed from those described here.

The nature of that development will not necessarily be linear or have a simplistic upward trajectory: it will have been impacted upon by subsequent developments. It is not presumed that this is the remaining 'reality', but the insights gathered through listening closely to the experience of developing inclusive practices through the perspectives of staff members have

provided a unique account of the impact of emotion, staff relationships, values and inclusive school cultures which can support the development of further thinking and research in this area.

A Reflective Researcher:

In striving to be a reflective researcher, I have been aware throughout the research process of the need to carefully reflect upon the decisions that I have taken to more closely define and ‘bound’ the particular focus of study, and the implications of this upon the development of an appropriate research methodology. At this stage, looking back at the research process, I would like to identify some key issues impacting upon the boundaries that I drew around the study and the impact that the research has had upon my own learning.

The inclusion and exclusion of different voices within the study:

The purpose of this study was to gain a deep understanding of the complex issue of inclusion through the perspectives of practitioners mediating the challenges on a day to day basis. Whilst it is acknowledged that the issue of inclusion cannot fully be understood without reference to the perspectives of the pupils and parents living the experience, I made the purposeful decision that I could not accommodate their voices and experiences within this study. This was important to enable me to fully focus upon and listen to the accounts of the professionals.

The exclusion of the voice of the support staff was also a conscious decision. Although within the schools there is a sense that staff work as a team, including teachers, senior leaders and support staff, and particularly in School S there is the notion of the ‘flat hierarchy’, yet within the study I wanted to focus more on the strategic issues that the teachers and senior leaders identified, and this may not have been so apparent within the accounts of the support staff.

For the purpose of this study, as a researcher I feel that the focus upon the perspective of the teachers and senior leaders has been extremely valuable. It has enabled me to really explore the issue of developing inclusive practices from a particular perspective, and has resulted in a deep understanding of the issues from that particular perspective, without the research being complicated by having to respond to too many voices experiencing inclusion in very different ways.

The research focus and approach was therefore appropriate for the aims of this study, although in future research opportunities I would like to return to the issue and explore it from other different perspectives, bringing in the voices of the pupil and parent as well as the practitioners.

Moving from the 'case' to themes and issues:

Throughout the research process it has been important to me to develop an approach to managing the case studies which allows them to be taken as illustrative and valuable as individual cases. Thus each one presents a unique account of the experience of developing inclusive practices, and the assumption is not that these should be compared, contrasted or replicated with other settings.

Within Chapter 5, a particular style of data presentation was therefore adopted where the account of developing inclusive practices was presented using the voices of the practitioners involved, with me, as researcher, providing a narrative built around the data gathered through the research. The two case studies are therefore intended to provide a rich account of the experiences of developing inclusive practices which are unique to the individual schools, and from which comparisons or judgements are not made.

Within the Discussion section (Chapter 6) however, the intention was to support the reader to move beyond the unique experience of the individual case studies, to bring out some of the key themes and issues, in their complexity, to support the reader to be able to see the relevance to aspects of their own practices. A conscious decision was therefore made to move away from presenting the data particular to each individual school, to an approach which focused upon bringing the themes, rather than the individual schools to the forefront. At this point, the complex themes are central to the account, with data from the school and references from literature being used to support those complex themes.

The development of the models:

This research has highlighted the tensions and challenges which exist when engaging in developing inclusive practices. What emerged from the case studies was not a cosy picture of ways to agree, develop and sustain inclusive practices through the implementation of specific practices or approaches, but rather a complex inter-relationship between a diverse range of factors, creating both resources to support the development of inclusive practices and also barriers, tensions and challenges. This understanding is important to retain, which is why I made the decision during the Discussion Chapter to develop the complex models of Resources (p106 and p113) and Barriers, Tensions and Challenges (p106 and p121), and to discuss them in a way to emphasise the complexity of the interplay of those factors, rather than to reduce that

complexity into a simplistic checklist of approaches which may be seen to make a difference.

Whilst this approach worked well, and retained the integrity that I had wished to sustain throughout of moving beyond reducing complex understanding into a simplistic checklist of features which could be replicated or transplanted in other setting, yet I did have principled reservations about just leaving the study with those complex models.

I am passionate about the notion of developing inclusive practices. I believe that it is essential that we support teachers, schools and policy makers to not only recognize the importance of providing educational experiences which are relevant, accessible and enjoyable to all; but that also there is understanding of the complexity of that task. As the research has demonstrated, inclusion is an ongoing process of development which will include hugely positive and rewarding experiences, but also significantly negative and demoralizing experiences as well. As a researcher, whilst I had wanted to demonstrate the complexity, challenges and tensions of developing inclusive practices, I had not wanted to leave the issue without providing some positive messages which can also be drawn from the research data. Thus, whilst the models which identify the resources and barriers, challenges and tensions are important, it was also important to me to support the reader to move beyond this towards a more hopeful representation of how inclusive practices could be effectively developed and supported in schools. Whilst I had always wanted to move away from any simple checklist of concrete practices which have to be undertaken in a particular way in schools, what I did want to present was a model which drew together all of the key positive themes and features which emerged from the complex data gathered. The three models: Resources to support (p106 and p113); Barriers, tensions and challenges (p106 and p121) and Understanding the development of inclusive practices in schools (p127) should therefore all be seen and used together to represent the full complexity of what emerged through the research. The final model is therefore essential. It helps to move the notion of inclusion away from potentially unattainable ideological issues (Thomas & Loxley, 2007) and the findings of the study away from a focus upon the negative impossibility and impracticability of something which cannot be ‘prescribed’. It also helps to move towards a more positive conclusion which, whilst still retaining and fully acknowledging the complexity, enables the key issues and findings to be summarized to

support further teacher reflection about how those issues can be achieved and worked towards within their particular school context.

As a researcher, the three models are therefore all essential, and should be considered together, for, when taken separately, they lose some of the insight and complex understanding that this study has generated.

A learning journey:

Throughout the research process, I have been aware of and have reflected upon my own personal learning journey: which has been significant on a number of levels.

As a researcher, I have worked through the research process to develop and sustain a very particular non evaluation and non judgemental approach. This has been a very particular position to take, and has enabled me to gather the rich data and deep understanding of the issue of developing inclusive practices through the eyes and voices of key practitioners that I had wanted.

As documented through Chapters 3 and 4 (Methodology and Ethics) there were times when it seemed difficult to sustain the approach that I had developed, and tensions existed between the positioning of myself as researcher, and the range of experiences and understanding that I already possessed about the issue of developing inclusive practices. However, by working through the issues and tensions reflexively throughout the research process: by making full use of research diaries to write about the difficulties and developments in my thinking and understanding, I was able to develop confidence in the approach that I took, and was able to sustain the position to achieve the research that I had wished to complete. This learning journey has taught me much about my personal methodological principles and values. It has helped me to develop particular research tools and approaches which I shall be able to continue to use and adapt with confidence in future research opportunities.

As a professional working in a variety of different roles, the process of undertaking and completing this research has also been a significant and very influential learning journey. As was indicated at the beginning of the thesis, in addition to completing the doctoral research, I also work directly with schools and practitioners to consider and develop their inclusive practices.

A key aim for me when engaging upon a professional doctorate was to use it as an exciting and unique opportunity to challenge and increase my own understandings of

the issues, and to use the opportunity to support the development of my own learning. I did not want to engage in research which simply reinforced or validated understandings that I already possessed: I wanted to use the research process as an opportunity to provide “principled interruptions” (Ainscow et al, 2006) to my own thinking and practice.

Having the opportunity to re-evaluate my own understandings and to look at issues which have become familiar to me, in different ways, listening closely and understanding it through the eyes and voices of practitioners: “making the familiar unfamiliar” (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995) has been significant.

It has changed the way that I approach the teaching and training that I deliver to practitioners engaging in the Masters level courses that I run, and has changed the way that I approach advisory and consultancy work with individual schools. Engaging in the research and developing understanding of the complex issues which have emerged from the data has given me the confidence in my professional roles to provide time and space for other practitioners to experience those ‘principled interruptions’. The focus of my support is therefore now much more about providing reflective spaces for practitioners to stand back from their own practices and critique them in different ways rather than immediately going in to provide ‘answers’. I am able to more confidently support schools to move away from a reliance upon prescribed programmes and interventions, towards enabling them to instead look in a more focused way at the key underlying issues around school culture and staff relationships, emotion and identity.

The research process has been a significant learning experience for me, both personally and professionally. However, I do not see this as the end of the learning journey: rather the beginning. The research has identified so many complex themes and issues, and there is now much that I wish to disseminate from the thesis itself: including critical writing about the development of the three models and how these can be used to support and enhance understanding of the development of inclusive practices both from a practitioner and policy maker perspective.

I would also like to undertake further research to follow up some of the complex issues: to look, for example, in more detail at any links between established stable staff groups, and an increase in the potential ability to include pupils with more diverse and complex

needs; and to link the themes of this research in with wider research which considers the issues from the pupil, parent and wider workforce of the school.

I also plan to share and develop much of the ongoing reflective learning which characterised my methodological approach in future writing and research within the areas of developing inclusive practices and ethnographic case study research.

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Appendix 1: Overview of Data:

School N:

Research Visits:

Phase 1:

- 17.09.07- Discussion with HT/ DH to agree research process
Tour of the school with DH/ SENCO
Collected some initial school documentation: prospectus/ policy
- 30.10.07- Interview conversation with HT
Observation of whole school assembly
Introduction to other members of staff in staffroom during playtime
Informal observations/ classroom visits to see Literacy sessions to gain more information about school context
- 6.12.07- Interview conversation with DH/ SENCO

Phase 2:

- 13.05.08- Planning discussion with HT to discuss plan for Phase 2 research activities
- 23.6.08- Attended a staff meeting: reintroduced myself to staff and observed interactions and discussions during the staff meeting
- 24.06.08- Classroom visit and learning conversation with Year 3/ 4 CT
Classroom visit and learning conversation with Year 3 CT
Strategic interview with DH/ SENCO
- 3.7.08- Classroom visit and learning conversation with Year 5 CT
Strategic discussion with HT & DH/ SENCO- interrupted so not recorded

Phase 3:

- 23.09.08- Year 6 CT Themes learning conversation
Business Manager/ SLT- Themes learning conversation
TA Meeting to discuss perceptions of inclusion within the school context: what works well, and any barriers
Sunshine Room TA learning conversation
Year 3 CT Themes learning conversation
Year 5 CT Themes learning conversation
Strategic focus group learning conversation
- 14.10.08- Led Inclusion staff meeting

School S:

Research Visits:

Phase 1:

- 11.09.07- Brief initial meeting with HT and DH/ SENCO
Guided Tour around the nursery, Foundation and KS1 departments with Senior TA
Learning Conversation with HT
Brief concluding meeting to plan new dates and confirm details with HT and DH/ SENCO

- 15.10.07- Observed whole school assembly
Learning conversation with Senior TA about KS2
Learning conversation with Senior TA and SENCO re roles and context of their school
Learning conversation with FLO re roles and context of the school
- 11.12.07- Observations around the school to gain further understanding of the context of the school
Observed planning meeting with HT and Advanced Skills Teachers working within the school
- Phase 2:**
- 20.05.08- Research planning with DH/ SENCO
- 17.06.08- Classroom visit and learning conversation with Year 5 CT
Classroom visit and learning conversation with Year 2 CT.
Strategic focus group conversation
- 30.06.08- Attended a staff meeting: reintroduced myself to staff and observed interactions and discussions during the staff meeting
- 7.07.08- Classroom visit and learning conversation with Year 4 CT
Classroom visit and learning conversation with Year 1 CT
- Phase 3:**
- 29.9.08- Led Inclusion staff meeting
- 9.10.08- Strategic discussion with HT to review research themes.

Appendix 2:

Early writing drafts about the development of the research approach and tensions within it.

Acknowledging Self within the Research Process.

May 2008

A central issue running throughout the research is my relationship as researcher with the research process. In this sense the research, and writing of it, is reflective and does look inwardly to analyse the personal traits and values which impact upon the different stages.

This is not simply an act of ‘self-indulgence’ (Ezzy, 2002; Reid, 2008)- rather it is seen as essential in order to clearly demonstrate the inextricable links which exist between my own values, experiences and assumptions and how these have impacted upon my writing and thinking about inclusive development- and thus upon the development of my role as a researcher.

This section therefore acts as an introduction to provide the context and reflective understandings behind some of the issues facing me as a researcher,.

Throughout the research process, I am aware that my values have impacted upon decisions to chose particular methodological approaches:

“In ‘doing’ research we enact what we value.” (Ely et al, 1991: 232)

It has been crucially important to me, that the research styles and methodologies that I have incorporated and used within the research do not undermine my own clear values and principles in relation to the area of Inclusion and the development of inclusive practices within school settings.

Choices that have been made throughout the research process, or journey, clearly reflect aspects of my own experiences, values and belief systems, and in this way, I can identify with Deborah Lamb, cited within Ely (1991), who stated that:

“Perhaps ‘all research is me-search’. Me-search, including one’s personal biases, is certainly a part of the ethnographers pursuit of knowledge.” [Ely, 1991: 124.]

Many writers and researchers working in the qualitative approach (Ely, 1991; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Delamont, 2002) emphasise the possibility of moving away from the austere objectivity of the traditional positivist position, and it has been comforting and interesting to explore different ideas linked with this theme as I have grown in confidence as a researcher.

In this development of my own thinking, I can identify a number of key areas and themes which have started to influence how I have approached the research process:

- 1.Objectivity- Subjectivity
2. Personal history and experiences which will impact upon the research

3. How interpretation will be affected by
4. The value laden nature of qualitative research

Although it has been possible for me to identify these different themes, it is very difficult to analyse each in turn, as rather than being separate components within the research planning and journey; instead they are completely inter-linked and interact with each other.

At the outset of the research, as a novice researcher, I was concerned and anxious about issues pertaining to objectivity. Looking back at my initial plans and proposals, I can see an attempt to remove any possible links between my own experiences and beliefs and the research that I wished to engage in. As I have progressed through the research process, I have been forced to acknowledge that, for me, everything that I do within the research IS inextricably linked to my own values. In fact, I have found that the research becomes richer when I have acknowledged my own personal assumptions and value systems, and this is why it has been important for me to include this section within the final thesis. As I undertook the research, I understood how important it is to:

“Acknowledge that no matter how much you try you can not divorce your research and writing from your past experiences, who you are, what you believe and what you value. Being a clean slate is neither possible nor desirable. The goal is to become more reflective and conscious of how who you are may shape and enrich what you do, not to eliminate it.” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003: 34)

Thus, whilst it is important not to become completely led and swayed by personal preferences and beliefs, I have understood the need to acknowledge to myself the impact of my own values upon how I interact with the research process.

Qualitative research has been described as, not only:

“an excellent tool for investigating the world at large, but as both a passageway and a metaphor for an exploration into self.” (Ely, 1991: 108)

Reid (2008), whilst acknowledging the importance of ‘placing self in the research’, does suggest that there are boundaries, and that it may be important not to take it further, by sharing information about the researcher. If this occurs, Reid argues that it could result in:

“more than locating the author’s voice and can go as far as an autobiographical immersion in the text (Ellis, 1995).” (Reid, 2008: 25)

Reflecting upon my own experiences of the research process, I can understand that there must be boundaries, but that these may be very flexible and continually evolving, rather than rigid and set. At times, it is more important to be objective, and, for example, an objective set of interview or questionnaire questions could be devised. However, following from that, the delivery of the questions or the interpretation of them may involve some introspection and

reflection upon why questions were chosen or phrased in certain ways, and also how the answers will move the research forward in different ways.

Need to acknowledge that myself, as researcher is the 'key instrument' in the research process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003: 4)

Ely also acknowledges this:

"As qualitative researchers, we have the great good fortune, or perhaps misfortune, depending on one's point of view, to rely on ourselves as the laboratory equipment to aid us in our research." (Ely, 1991: 108)

However, Ely also identifies that, although we are the 'primary instrument', we are not 'cool, automatised instruments'. Rather, our response to and interpretation of the data and the research setting will completely depend upon our human reaction to it. A human reaction which is coloured by our own mood, experiences, understandings. It is therefore essential that through the research process these:

"personal responses to what we see and hear ." (Ely, 1991: 108) are acknowledged.

For me as a novice, and developing researcher the whole research process is unfamiliar territory, which continually needs to be re-mapped and re-negotiated along the way:

"Starting out, it would be helpful if there were a road map or a set of instructions. Being the first to explore new territory means having to create your own as you go along." (Schostak, 2002: 3)

Appendix: 3

Research Diary reflections and fieldnote entries exploring the notion of being non judgemental:

Fieldnote N1: 17.9.07

“Continuing to reflect upon the difficulty of commenting upon the environment or attitudes without being critical or judgemental- this is currently a real issue for me. Eg- the learning environment: to me it seemed very boring!! But here I am judging the environment through my own perspective- need to detach myself from this.”

Fieldnote N2: 30.10.07

“Part of me is still finding it difficult to fully adopt a researcher approach when I’m in the school- I am resisting being critical of any practices, and am finding it difficult to analyse and reflect upon practices without being CRITICAL of them.”

Research Diary: 5.6.08

“I continue to return to the issue of being non judgemental. This has evolved as a central value guiding the particular research that I am undertaking. I had not originally foreseen or anticipated how important it would be- or how many tensions it would present! It fits in with my wider methodological decisions about positioning myself as a researcher wanting to “interrupt” my own thinking and see the issues that I am familiar with in a new light- the writing of Delamont and Ainscow is really important here, and I shall need to return to it to continue to make sense of this notion.

At the moment, the tension is between me moving away from making judgements about the practice that I see or hear about, but instead gathering data that is interesting, valid and which will help to move my own, the staff members within the school, and other peoples understandings of inclusive education forward.

As I analyse the data I am starting to see themes, and I think that I shall take these back to the staff members to enable them to interpret and validate the judgements that I am making about them. This may be a way to help me to sustain this non judgemental position that I have been developing.”

Appendix 4:

Research Phases- Early critical writing about the development of the research phases:

September 2008

The original planning was very focused upon gathering data solely from the Headteacher, and then backing this up with paper based documentation and evidence. Apart from a general questionnaire about inclusion to the staff, and an open invitation to talk to me, there was no planning for interaction and discussion about the issues with other staff members. I had also not originally planned to undertake any form of observation within the setting.

Reflecting upon the approach, it now feels very distant- with the feeling of me going in as researcher to extract various information in quite a clinical way to then take away and interpret in my own way....

Phase 1:

Looking back through the data that I gathered, the fieldnotes that I made, and also the reflective notes that I kept, I was not confident about the particular research approach. I was anxious about being a 'novice researcher'. I had concerns about how I approached and worked with the schools and their staff members, as I did not want to 'waste' their time.

I also feel as if I was slightly overwhelmed by the enormity of the research task that I had set myself, and was trying to define and clarify for myself what I wanted to find out, and how I could do this.

I was particularly aware of the need to be sensitive to the work load of school based staff, and to make the most effective use of both their and my own time in school....

Phase 3:

At this time, I became aware of how much data had already been gathered, and concerned that if I just continued with the Phase 2 research activities, this data would just continue to grow.

I started to think about how I was going to interpret and analyse the data gathered, and how I would be able to do this in a way which was consistent with the philosophical and methodological approach that I had adopted throughout the whole research process.

I did not want the analysis and presentation of issues/ themes to feel as if I was making evaluative judgements upon either school. I also wanted to ensure that the themes and issues that I picked out through my analysis of the data were not subjective, but that they really were issues that staff within the school agreed were an important part of their whole school development.

It was important to be able to build in a Phase of research activities, during which I would be able to take back to the school some of the key themes and issues which had emerged, situate them back into the context from which they had arisen, and give staff members the opportunity

to discuss these and give me further feedback about whether these are, in fact, key to the development of inclusive practices in their eyes.

This seemed to fit with the philosophical and methodological approach that I had consistently strived for throughout the research process. I would be able to benefit from further interpretation of the themes through the eyes of the staff members within each school itself.

As I planned this phase, I could see two distinct benefits of this approach:

1. It would ensure that the interpretations and analysis of themes were contextual and realistic, agreed by the staff members themselves, rather than evaluative as seen through the eyes of an 'outsider'. For me, this would make the analysis more valuable and meaningful.
2. I also felt that it would give me the opportunity to give something back to the school itself. Throughout the process, I have struggled with the issue of my role as a researcher, and have tried to ensure that I do not waste the time of the staff members. By sharing with them the themes that had emerged, and by talking about them I felt that this would help the school itself to gain further insight into the issues."

Appendix 5: Fieldnote Template

Research Setting:

Date of Visit:

Time:

Nature of the visit:

Fieldnote number:

Title of Notes:

Descriptive Fieldnotes:

<u>Areas to describe:</u>	<u>Description:</u>	<u>Comment/ Reflection:</u>
Portraits of the subjects (full descriptions)		
Reconstruction of dialogue		
Description of physical setting (pencil drawings/ plans/ maps etc)		

<u>Areas to describe:</u>	<u>Description:</u>	<u>Comment/ Reflection:</u>
Accounts of particular events (list who was involved/ in what nature/ nature of action...)		
Depiction of activities (detailed descriptions of sequence of behaviour)		
Observer's behaviour (own behaviour and assumptions)		

Reflective Fieldnotes:

<u>Areas to describe:</u>	<u>Description:</u>	<u>Comment/ Reflection:</u>
Reflections on Analysis (what am I learning/ trends, patterns, themes emerging/ connections with pieces of data)		
Reflections on Method (how are procedures/ strategies working? Rapport with participants? Successes and problems encountered)		
Reflections on ethical conflicts and dilemmas		

<u>Areas to describe:</u>	<u>Description:</u>	<u>Comment/ Reflection:</u>
Reflections on the observer's frame of mind (encounters that provide breakthroughs to new ways of thinking/ assumptions)		
Points of clarification (correct or clarify informational errors)		
Planning for the next visit:		

Appendix 6:

Draft Writing: Reflections on developing the observation framework:

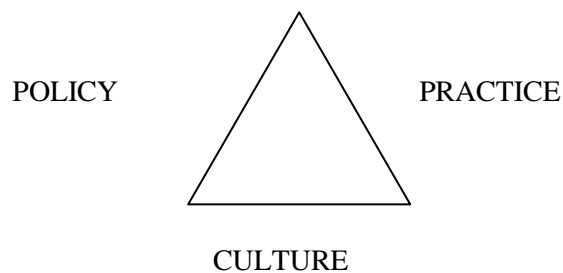
October 2008

I spent a considerable amount of time thinking about and planning this particular research tool and it is interesting that something as seemingly natural as observation, which, as an experienced teacher and advisor I have been used to using in my daily working practice, demanded such scrutiny and contemplation within the context of the research approach that I wanted to adopt and develop. At this stage, there were two clear issues at the forefront of my mind- both of which require some discussions and analysis.

1. I wanted to ensure that my time within the classroom ‘observing’ was valuable: valuable to myself in terms of enabling me to gather rich data, and valuable to the class teacher in terms of not wasting her time, generating more work or making her anxious. As a researcher knowledgeable and experienced about the realities of classroom based practice, I felt that there could be the danger that I could miss key issues as they presented within the classroom context. There is the danger that if you are too close to the research context you fail to see the intricacies of the situation. I therefore had to continually try to look at the classroom practice through new eyes, and to find ways to ‘make the familiar unfamiliar’ (Delamont)
2. I also wanted to ensure that my time within the classroom was not evaluative. The purpose of these observations was not to make value judgements about what was happening, or, indeed, to ‘check up’ or evaluate the effectiveness of inclusion in any way. Rather, my purpose was to try to gain a better understanding of the reality of the teaching experience for the teacher. This understanding would then be used to personalize and structure the discussions and learning conversations that I would then have with the teacher.

Getting the balance right between these two issues was a difficult one. On the one hand, to address the first point, I felt that I needed some form of observation sheet- to help me to focus my observations. However, I felt that by doing this, it would force me to make, even subconsciously, judgements about the practice that I was observing, as well as making me pre-empt the situation.

I spent some time considering a range of observation schedules, adapted, for example from the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). I therefore considered using their broad theoretical framework as a starting point:



I also considered using key indicators from the Index for Inclusion as the starting point of an observation schedule, for example:

- A2:2 Creating Inclusive Cultures/ Establishing Inclusive Values/ Staff, governors, students and parents/ carers share a philosophy of Inclusion
- A2:5 Creating Inclusive Cultures/ Establishing Inclusive Values/ Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school
- C1:2 Evolving Inclusive Practices/ Orchestrating Learning/ Lessons encourage the participation of all students.

I was concerned however, that this did not fully reflect my own philosophical values and the approach that I wanted to take to the research. I did not want to go into the situation with pre-formulated lists of things to see, or a tick list of practices to ‘check up on’. Instead, I had wanted the issues to emerge from the research setting or the research participants themselves.

The approach that I tended to prefer, was therefore to go into the classroom setting with a blank sheet upon which to note down significant details as they emerged, within the context of the particular lesson that was happening.

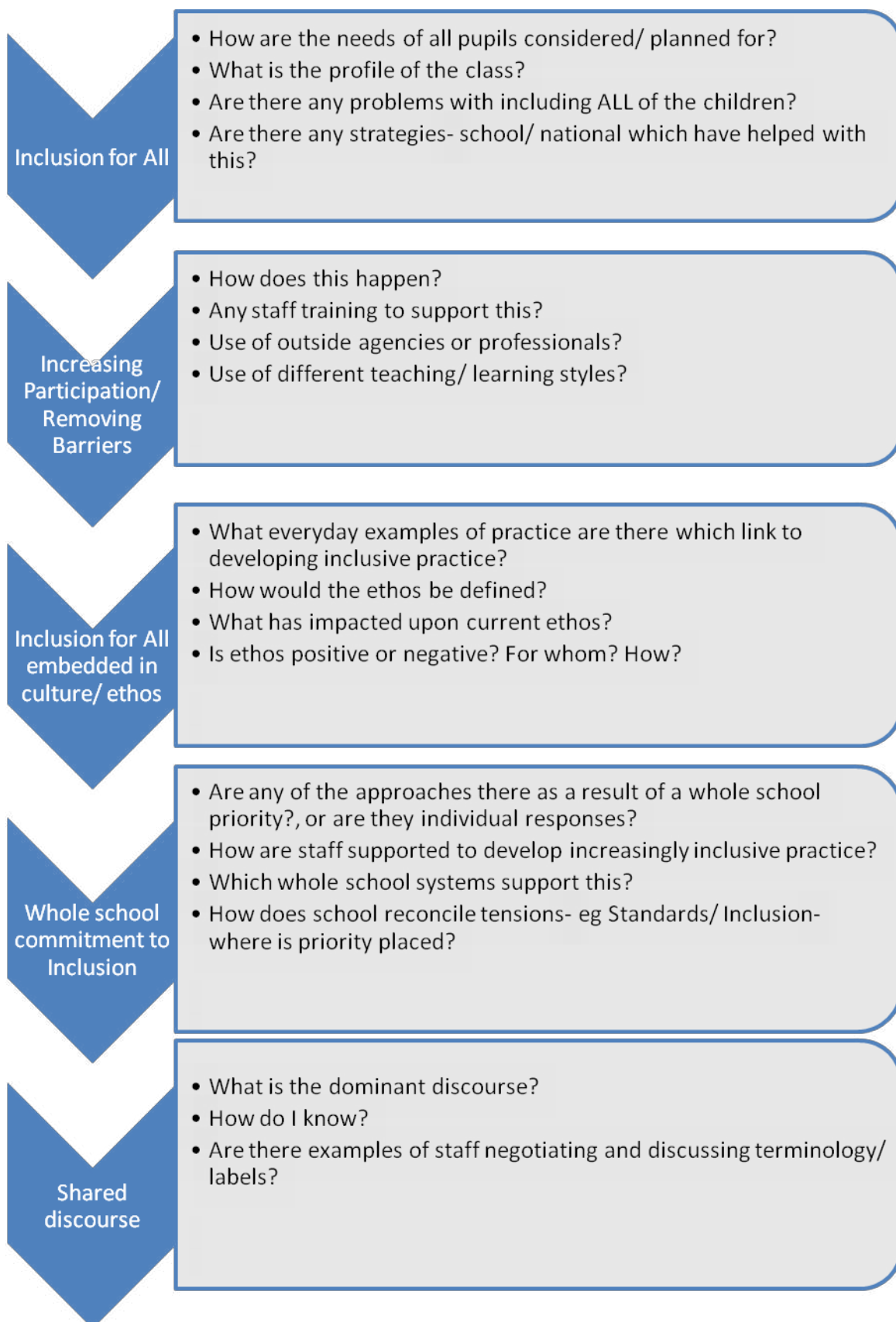
However, although I felt that I preferred that approach, I still felt hesitant about going in with no focus- linking back to my concerns that I may end up not noticing anything of significance as I am too close to the educational experience and activity that I was going to observe, and that I would end up wasting both my own and the teachers time.

I therefore developed an Observation Prompt sheet which provided me with the safety that I felt that I required.

The issues that I drew together on the Observation Prompt sheet emerged both from my research questions and emerging themes from the research data that I had gathered during Phase 1, and also from my own thinking and understanding about Inclusion.

I used it before going into the classroom to focus my thinking on key areas that would be interesting to notice, but did not in anyway use it as a sheet against which to ‘tick off’ or evaluate practices.

Indeed, many of the questions that I posed on the Observation Prompt sheet were not raised during the classroom visits, and similarly, other issues that I had not considered were raised.



As I started doing the classroom visits, my confidence in the approach that I was taking, and the value of it, grew. The staff understood that I was not going into their classrooms to make any evaluative judgements about their practice, but that I was spending time in there in order to enable me to understand the reality of their teaching experience better, and to enable me to ask more informed questions during the learning conversations.

Typically, I made notes during the classroom visit on the learning environment and the profile of the class.

I was able to clearly define my purpose for the classroom visit- that I was using observation as a tool for EXPLORING PEOPLE'S THINKING- not as a way to EVALUATE PEOPLE'S ACTIONS.

This is significant within the context of my research and the overall philosophical and methodological approach that I have adopted and developed.

The classroom visit therefore offered a basket of prompts, and provided the context for the learning conversations (discussed below). It was not a means to gather data for analysis, but served the purpose of enabling me to have a common experience with the teachers that we could both refer to during the following learning conversation.

Indeed, set up in this way, the teachers themselves appreciated the value that I was placing upon using the classroom visits as a way to view Inclusion and the teaching reality through their own eyes.

Appendix 7:

Learning Conversation Schedule

Learning Conversations with Class Teachers:

Thank you for letting me come into your classroom to find out more about the context of the school. It would now be really useful for me if we could have a chat about the children that you teach and any issues that you think are important around inclusive practice that you think about when you are teaching this group of children.

How long have you taught at this school?

What do you particularly enjoy about working here?

What are the challenges of this school?

Could you briefly give me a little bit more information about the class of children that you are teaching?- eg what types of needs do they have?

Is this similar or different to the school as a whole?

Do you think that the lesson that I saw was a 'typical' lesson?

If no- what was different?

Do you think that any of the children face barriers to learning?

What are these barriers?

What do you as teacher have to do to support the children overcome these barriers?

Are there problems with including all of the children?

How do you think that the staff as a whole within this school, support each other to develop inclusive practice?- eg do you use any particular strategies/ have you had particular training/ is there a school based system of support?

Appendix 8:

Strategic Focus Group Conversation Schedule

Focus: Timeline of Key Incidents

Thank you all for your time.

It will be really useful for me to be able to use this time to reflect with you on the key strategic issues which have an impact upon the schools ability to develop inclusive practices.

To start with, it will be useful to brainstorm and plot as a group key incidents or initiatives which have occurred over the last 5 year period, which may have led to, or resulted in, the school developing more inclusive practices.

This could include, changes in staffing, development of key roles, staff training, changes in the locality, OFSTED Inspections- or anything else.

The key incidents and initiatives could be negative or positive, and we will plot them on this large sheet of paper to gain an overview of some of the particular issues which have influenced the development of the school as it is today.

As well as of interest to me for my research, this activity may also give you an opportunity to really stand back and think about all of the things which have impacted upon the development of the school as it now is.

- What key incidents/ initiatives do you think have had an impact upon the development of the school?
- When did this happen?
- Would you say that at the time this was a positive or a negative experience?
- Why?
- How did it affect you/ other pupils?
- When we consider all of the key incidents/ initiatives that we have mapped- are there any key themes which stand out?
- What seems to have had the most impact upon the development of inclusive practices?
- Why do you think this is?
- Are there any key themes/ area that seem to be missing at the moment?
- Why do you think that these have been missed?- eg have they happened, but were forgotten? Or did they not happen? Why?

Appendix 9:

Inclusion Staff Meeting for Research Schools.

4. Exploring individual understandings of the term ‘Inclusion’.

These will remain confidential and anonymous, although written responses will be collated and analysed for the purposes of the research. Teachers will then also be encouraged to share aspects of their definition at the end to inform Activity 2 (below)

- i) Individually, write a sentence which encompasses your understanding of the term ‘inclusion’.
- ii) Reflect upon this sentence- what has influenced your thinking? Eg- has the media; your own experiences of school as a child; your experiences of school as a teacher; government policy; colleagues influenced or impacted upon your understanding of the term? How?

5. Agreeing a general vision of Inclusion for the whole school.

Teachers will be encouraged to share any issues from the previous activity, and ideas will be noted on a flip chart.

- i) What key aspects of your definitions do you think would need to be included within a statement about the vision for Inclusion within this school? Ask one member of staff to bullet point these ideas for the group.
- ii) Ask for a member of staff to volunteer to lead the group to put these ideas into one clear statement.

6. Factors that support and factors that hinder the general vision of Inclusion for the school.

- i) Using the school Inclusion vision statement agreed in Activity 3, ask each member of staff to individually write down one factor that supports and one which hinders the vision of Inclusion being implemented as fully and effectively as possible. These can be written anonymously.
- ii) Ask one member of staff to volunteer to collect the ‘hinder’ factors; read them out to the group and lead the group in discussing and grouping these factors.
- iii) Ask another member of staff to do the same for ‘supporting’ factors.

Appendix 10:

Individual Inclusion Questionnaires.

What does the term Inclusion mean to you?

Write a sentence to try to encompass your understanding of this term:

Now, spend some time reflecting upon your definition.

What do you think has influenced or impacted upon your thinking to lead you to this definition?

Is it:

- ☐ Media?
- ☐ Your own experiences of school as a child?
- ☐ Your own experiences of school as a teacher?
- ☐ Government Policy?
- ☐ Colleagues?
- ☐ Training?
- ☐ Other- please specify:.....

Please tick as many of the above that are applicable, and then briefly describe how these have impacted upon your thinking in this area:

Appendix 11:

Full descriptions of each stage and the related procedures within the data analysis cycle

STAGE 1- Contextualising the field of study

Stage 1 is an ongoing and continuous stage which lays the foundation for all research activities and analysis throughout the whole study. From the start of the research process, the overall methodological approach has been focused upon enabling rich description and detail of the particular setting, rather than basing analysis or comment upon prior experiences, understandings or conceptual models. It has therefore been important to ensure that themes have, as far as possible, emerged from the data, rather than them being imposed upon the data from my own personal experiences or understandings, or readings from the literature (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Whilst Data Analysis has been an ongoing cyclical feature, closely linked to the emerging and evolving methodology and data collection techniques used, the process of developing specific codes, categories and themes developed later within the process. This helped to ensure that the categories and themes were fully grounded in the data from the school and my growing understanding of the context of the particular research setting, rather than being influenced by my own extensive prior knowledge of the research area and preconceptions. The focus within Stage 1 has therefore been upon contextualizing the field of study, through carefully written up fieldnotes and ongoing reflection which would then form the basis of planning for subsequent research visits. At this stage the analysis consists of identifying overall subjects of interest to return to, or questions that need to be asked during future visits.

STAGE 2: Preliminary Data Handling

This stage is purposefully labeled preliminary data handling rather than data analysis in recognition of the different stages of analysis, with the preliminary stages being around the more mechanical handling and coding of the data. Within this study this is seen as an essential stage, without which the more reflective and interpretative stages (Stages 5, 6 and 7) of the Data Analysis process could not occur.

Within this stage, the focus is upon the identification and sorting of broad themes and key “meaning units” (Ely et al, 1991). This has been achieved through the following key processes, full examples of which can be seen within the Appendix.

Process:	Document Produced:
Fieldnotes analysed	Data Analysis Emerging Issues
Phase 1 interviews reviewed	Phase 1 Interview Key Issues

Even at this stage of the Data Analysis cycle, the “transactional” (Ely et al, 1997: 165) way that data collection and analysis processes work together to provide a “funnel” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003:148), through which to more closely focus attention and future research activities could be evidenced.

STAGE 3- Detailed Coding

Stage 3 builds upon the preliminary data handling, and draws on the range of data gathered through Phase 2 and 3 (fieldnotes, documentary evidence, classroom visits, learning conversations, strategic focus group discussions). The focus is again upon identifying and clarifying contextually situated and relevant meaning units, and this is achieved through a process of highlighting by hand key information and assigning word codes on to the paper interview transcript, and the completion of Coded paper interview transcripts.

Meaning units have been enabled to emerge from the data itself (Creswell, 2007, Ely et al, 1991) rather than being based upon ‘traditional’ thinking units (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003) which would undermine other key methodological principles relating to the need to ensure that meaning and interpretation is grounded not in my prior knowledge but in the reality and experience of the staff members and schools involved.

Stage 3 can be linked with Huberman & Miles’ (1994) Data Reduction stage in their 3 stage model of Data Reduction, Data Display and conclusion drawing and verification, where data is:

“summarized, coded, and broken down into themes, clusters, and categories.” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 7)

STAGE 4- Reconsidering the Codes

It is important that codes are not seen as static and irreversible. Instead, the codes should remain flexible and open to further adaptation. New codes should be able to be added, existing codes to be discarded or changed, in order for the codes to be fully appropriate and meaningful. At this stage in the Data Analysis process, the coding systems which were tentatively suggested and linked to the data during Stage 3 are reviewed. After ensuring at least one days break between Stage 3 and 4, in order to enable the data and codes to be looked at with fresh eyes, the codes are transferred to the computer system. At this stage any omissions in coding are identified, and all codes are checked to ensure that they are meaningful, relevant and consistent across the whole analysis, producing Phase 2 and 3 Interview Initial Analysis Emerging Coding Category reports for each individual interview transcript.

During this stage of the process attention is paid not just to the “mundane processes of coding” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 27); but more particularly, to the central issue of re-evaluating the codes and data, to enable links to be made between the data in original and meaningful ways.

This, and the subsequent stages of the Model link closely with Huberman & Miles’ (1994) Data Display.

STAGE 5- Developing Categories:

At Stage 5, the codes and categories from individual interview transcripts have been further examined and analysed. The codes and categories have then been put together in meaningful ways to make further links between the data gathered through the use of Phase 2 and 3 Interview Coding Conceptual Frameworks.

STAGE 6- Linking Categories:

During this Stage, codes and categories are further verified and validated, with links made between categories and codes from all of the different data sources. The focus is also upon the search for both tensions and similarities in approach coming from a variety of different people and perspectives, and this will then form the basis of an evolving theory which can be linked with other relevant literature within the Discussion section to provide the underlying conceptual framework behind the whole research study. Developing Conceptual Framework reports are produced which summarise the data and codes for each separate data source under key theme headings.

STAGE 7- Fighting Familiarity

For stage 7, I have chosen to use Delamont & Atkinson’s (1995) phrase “Fighting Familiarity” to emphasise the need to move beyond the obvious and familiar aspects of the data to search for unexpected and surprising elements.

Throughout the Data Analysis Model that I have developed, it has been important to use coding systems to continually reflect and review the emerging themes and issues, and to ensure that they are contextually situated and relevant.

Within this stage, all of the data is revisited and analysed anew to try to look at the data not from the perspective of a person familiar with all of the issues, but from new angles and perspectives.

This is the exciting part of the Data Analysis process- where the researcher should be encouraged to revisit their data and to look at it in innovative, creative and different ways. The coding and analysis process becomes more than simplification and reduction, and instead moves into being seen as ‘data complication’. The process is then used to

“expand, transform, and reconceptualize data, opening up more diverse analytical possibilities.” (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 29)

During this Stage the emphasis is upon revisiting the analysis to ensure its' validity and relevance; and also upon relocating issues and striving to "make the familiar strange" (Delamont & Atkinson, 1995). Attention is paid to going "*beyond the data*" enabling creativity of thought, continued reflection and the posing of complex questions to enable the generation of further unique and original theories and frameworks to be developed (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996: 30).

Within this study, the Data at this Stage is represented in School Data Tables and Three Areas of Analysis.

This stage then therefore prepares the researcher for the writing up of the Data Analysis Account, and completes the Data Analysis spiral as presented by Creswell (2007). It also links closely with Huberman & Miles' (1994) final stage of their three part Data Analysis process- Conclusion Drawing and Verification.

Appendix 12:
Examples of Data Analysis processes to illustrate the Model of
Progressive and Concurrent Stages of Inductive Analysis:

Stage 1- Contextualising the field of study- example Fieldnote:

Research Setting:

Northborough Junior School

Date of Visit:

Tuesday 30th October 2007

Time:

9.20am- 11.25am

Nature of the visit:

- Interview conversation with HT around general context of the school
- Observation of a whole school assembly
- Time in the staffroom- introductions
- General look around school- went into a few literacy lessons for short periods of time

Fieldnote number:

N2

Title of Notes:

Context building

Descriptive Fieldnotes:

<u>Areas to describe:</u>	<u>Description:</u>	<u>Comment/ Reflection:</u>
Portraits of the subjects (full descriptions)	<p>Spent most time with HT. She was initially busy sorting out a 'problem' (secretary)- a child would not enter the school. When she approached me she was calm- apologised for the delay and explained that the child had recently had a diagnosis of Aspergers and was having some difficulty coping with school. She explained that he needed some time to have things talked through with him.</p> <p>Manner during the interview was very open, honest and reflective- although she held back on some issues: why staff turnover had historically been so great. Mentioned that she has a disabled child in passing- did not pursue this at this time- do I need to?- links to life history interviewing.</p> <p>Lower KS 2 CT seemed a little abrupt- although said that she would be happy for me to speak with her.</p> <p>FLO and Year 3/ 4 class teacher very approachable and open: both have said that they would be very interested in talking to me at another time about the context of the school and inclusion.</p>	
Reconstruction of dialogue	<p>See Interview notes.</p> <p>Year 3/ 4 nurture class teacher:</p> <p>Me- "I am interested in hearing about all the fantastic things going on.... And also any challenges!"</p> <p>CT- "There's plenty of challenges in here!!"- said in a jovial and positive way</p>	
Description of physical setting (pencil drawings/ plans/ maps etc)	<p>I deliberately concentrated some of my attention upon the physical setting and the learning environment- as SENCO had previously emphasised this and seemed so proud of it. Initially I had been slightly 'critical' of it- although it had been very</p>	

Stage 2- Preliminary Data Handling

Data Analysis- **Emerging Issues Example:**

Learning Environment-

N1 17.9.07/ N2 30.10.07/ N3- 6.12.07/ N6 24.6.08

Ability Setting-

N1 17.9.07

S3 11.12.07

Barriers to Inclusion-

N1 17.9.07/ N2 30.10.07/ N4- 13.5.08/ N7 3.7.08/ N7 3.7.08

Researcher Approach- see separate analysis

Leadership Style-

N2 30.10.07

S1 11.9.07/ S6 30.6.08

Innovative Initiatives-

N4- 13.5.08

Views on Inclusion-

N4- 13.5.08/ N6 24.6.08

S1 11.9.07/ S1 11.9.07/ S1 11.9.07/ S1 11.9.07/ S1 11.9.07/ S2 15.10.07/ S2 15.10.07/ S4 20.5.08/ S4 20.5.08/ S4 20.5.08/ S5 17.6.08/ S5 17.6.08/ S5 17.6.08/ S5 17.6.08/ S5 17.6.08/ S5 17.6.08/ S6 30.6.08/ S6 30.6.08

Notion of 'successful schools'-

N2 30.10.07

Staff meeting- power relationships-

N5 23.6.08

Team approach-

N2 30.10.07/ N6 24.6.08

S2 15.10.07/ S6 30.6.08

Stage 2- Preliminary Data Handling- Phase 1 Interview Key Issues Example:

Analysis from tape:	Emerging Issues/ Themes
<p>Start of 2nd year as headteacher at the school.</p> <p>“Came as a new headteacher. Quite a steep learning curve, because up until now I have worked in schools which are quite high achieving, and through primary schools as well. Although we had SEN, they were more learning difficulties, and we didn’t have that many behavioural children. (0.24)</p> <p>“Coming into this school, we don’t just have behavioural difficulties and learning difficulties, we also have a lot of children with social and emotional problems- and that is difficult” (0.44)</p> <p>“A very very steep learning curve” (1.00)</p> <p>Was aware of context of the school before applying</p> <p>“What I wanted was to have a challenge because I had worked in these very nice schools, and the children were lovely and high achieving, but I always think that the most satisfaction that I ever got was with a class of children which were branded as the worst class in the school, and we had 8 real characters in there and came from poor backgrounds. And even though I would tear my hair out, they had such a good sense of humour, and I got more satisfaction out of this class of difficult children” (1.24)</p> <p>“I wanted the challenge. It’s a challenge.” (2.00)</p> <p>“I did think about it long and hard, but I thought ‘No- I’m ready for a challenge’” (2.21)</p> <p>“And it certainly has been a challenge!” (2.22)</p>	<p>New headteacher Steep learning curve Behaviour</p> <p>Social and emotional needs Difficult</p> <p>Steep learning curve</p> <p>Challenge ‘Nice schools’ Satisfaction</p> <p>Tear my hair out Satisfaction/ difficult children</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Challenge</p> <p>Challenge</p>

Stage 4- Reconsidering the Codes:
Initial Analysis Emerging Coding Category Report Example:

Phase 2: N2b; 24.6.08; Year 3/ 4 CT.

Initial Analysis:
Emerging Coding Categories:

First joined school

- September last, 07. (p1)

Previous school experience

- I'd done four years at my first school, which was an infants school. (p1)
- I think it's tricky, when you work in your first school, you learn a lot, quickly. (p1)

Reasons for coming to school

- I think it's tricky, when you work in your first school, you learn a lot, quickly. (p1)
- I don't know if it's how I perceived it, but when you join a school as a new teacher, as an NQT, you're kind of always seen as the NQT. (p1)
- So there's limited scope for progression. And I mean, really, I kind of felt that after three years I had learnt as much as I could from working in that school, and so started applying for jobs at the end of my third year, and was unsuccessful as I didn't have any key stage two experience. (p1)
- I'd learnt as much as I could about infants, and I thought brilliant, I can use the experience I've got and hopefully there are children that need to work at a key stage one infant level or in that way, and I'd be able to kind of use that experience. And then the job came up here, and it was to work specifically with children that needed a kind of key stage one approach to teaching, so I thought that's great. (p2)
- I'd be going into a key stage two school, but immediately I'd be building on the skills that I have. (p2)

Learning

- you learn a lot, quickly. (p1)
- there's limited scope for progression (p1)
- I had learnt as much as I could (p1)
- I'd learnt as much as I could about infants (p2)
- I don't think I could really learn anything more, (p6)
- I've learnt so much about special needs (p7)

Skills/ experience

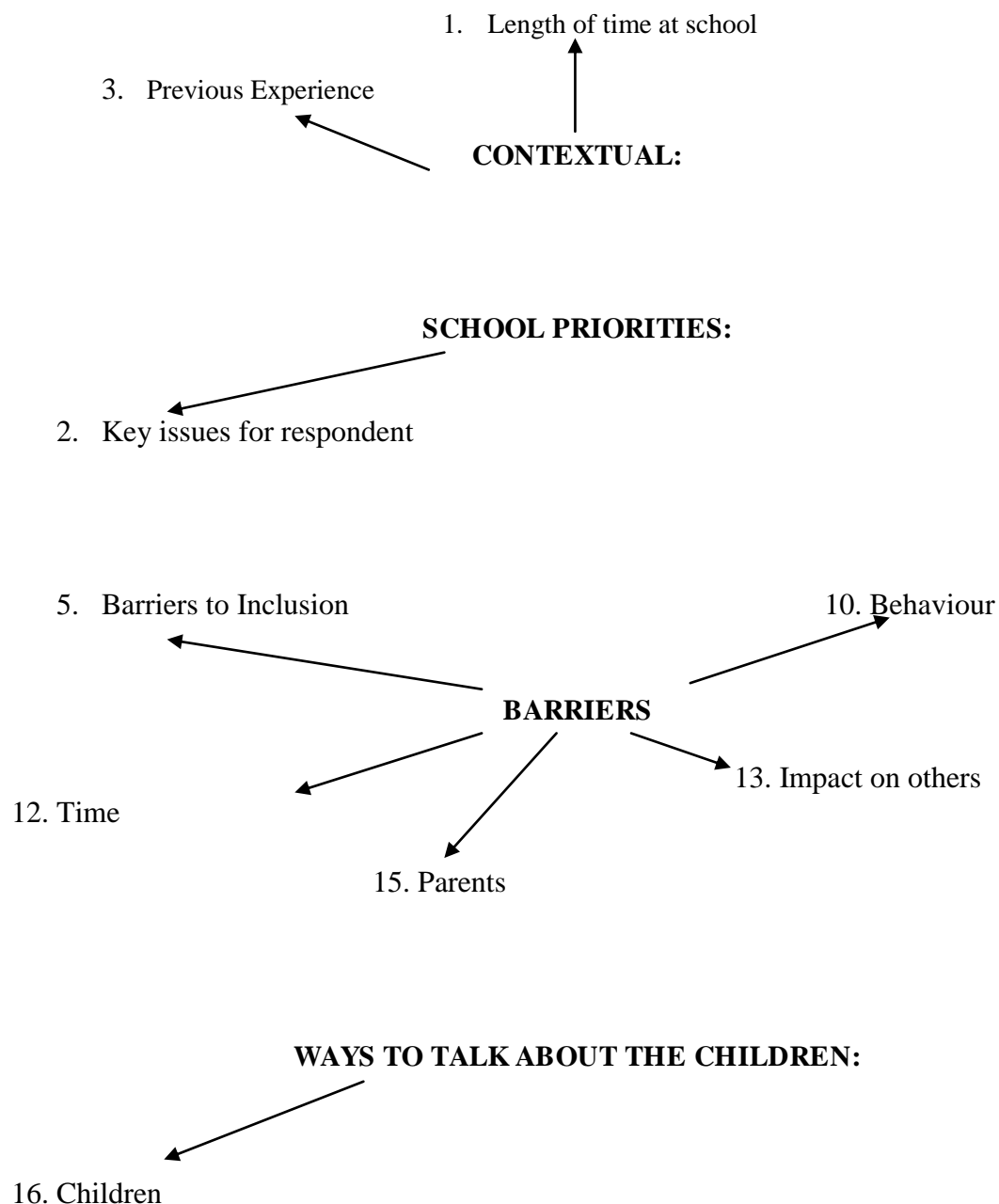
- I can use the experience I've got (p2)
- I'd be able to kind of use that experience. (p2)
- I'd be building on the skills that I have. (p2)

Stage 5- Developing Categories:

Coding Conceptual Framework Example-

Phase 3: N4c 23.9.08; CT.

Coding Conceptual Framework



Stage 6- Linking Categories:

Developing Conceptual Framework Example-

Developing Conceptual Framework: GROUPING CHILDREN:

N2b- 24.6.08- Year 3/ 4 CT:

- 26. Children's perception of Year 3/ 4 class
- 27. CT's perception of Year 3/ 4 class

N2a- 24.6.08- SENCO:

- 22. Year 3/ 4 class
- 19. Individuals

N2c- 24.6.08- Year 3 CT:

- 22. Grouping children

N4e- 23.9.08- SLT:

- 17. Differentiation
- 23. Year 3- 4 class

N4a- 23.9.08- Year 6 CT:

- 16. Labelling
- 17. Reducing differences
- 15. Children's perception of setting
- 18. Mixed ability
- 27. Special Year 3/ 4 class
- 12. Setting
- 13. Setting/ impact on CT's
- 14. Setting to support Inclusion

N3- 3.7.08- Year 5 CT:

- 15. Setting

Stage 7- Fighting Familiarity
School Data Tables- Example:
Table 1: School N Data Analysis- Emerging Themes:

- Themes linked with the emotional experience of developing inclusive practice
- Themes linked with the practical processes of developing inclusive practice
- Contextual themes

Fieldnotes	Phase 1 interviews	Phase 2 and 3 interviews
<p>Learning Environment- FN1 17.9.07/ FN2 30.10.07/ FN3- 6.12.07/ FN6 24.6.08</p> <p>Ability Setting- FN1 17.9.07/ FN7- 3.7.08</p> <p>Barriers to Inclusion- FN1 17.9.07/ FN2 30.10.07/ FN4- 13.5.08/ FN7 3.7.08</p> <p>Leadership Style- FN2 30.10.07</p> <p>Innovative Initiatives- FN4- 13.5.08</p> <p>Views on Inclusion- FN4- 13.5.08/ FN6 24.6.08</p> <p>Notion of ‘successful schools’-</p>	<p>Leadership- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07</p> <p>Steep Learning Curve- IntN1 30.10.07</p> <p>Behaviour- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07</p> <p>Social and emotional needs- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07</p> <p>Difficult- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07</p> <p>Challenge- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07</p> <p>‘Nice schools’- IntN1 30.10.07</p> <p>Satisfaction- IntN1 30.10.07</p>	<p>Grouping children- IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2b- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/ IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/</p> <p>Leadership- IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/</p> <p>Barriers to Inclusion- IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2b- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/ IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/</p> <p>Team- IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/</p> <p>Inclusion- IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2b-</p>

Stage 7- Fighting Familiarity

Three Areas of Analysis:

Data Analysis: Three Areas of Analysis-

For each school, the many different key themes have been grouped for analysis and discussion in the following ways.

Firstly, they have been colour coded on Tables (Table 1 and 2) to illustrate whether each key theme falls broadly into:

- data giving contextual information,
- data relating to the actions and processes of developing inclusive practice, and
- data relating to the emotions and feelings associated with the experience of developing inclusive practices.

Secondly, each of these three broad areas has been further classified and key themes grouped into sub categories to aid further understanding and vision of the overall emerging key issues:

Contextual:

- School Factors
- Cohort Factors
- Staff Context

Actions and processes:

- Learning/ Curriculum Factors
- Pupil Factors
- Staff Factors

Emotions and Feelings:

- Practitioner Philosophies
- Practitioner Learning
- Staff Focus
- Pupil Factors
- Staff Emotions

CONTEXTUAL DATA:

SCHOOL FACTORS:

Links with wider community- *IntN1*
30.10.07/ *IntN1a* 30.10.07
Local catchment area-
IntN1 30.10.07/ *IntN1a*
30.10.07
Multi-cultural- *IntN1*
30.10.07/ *IntN1a* 30.10.07
Contextual School-
IntN4b- 23.9.09/ *IntN4c*-
23.9.09/ *IntN4e*- 23.9.09/
Our school- *IntN1*
30.10.07/ *IntN1a* 30.10.07

COHORT FACTORS:

Difficult home backgrounds- *IntN1*
30.10.07/ *IntN1a*
30.10.07
Parents- *IntN1* 30.10.07/
IntN1a 30.10.07
Contextual Cohort-
IntN4a- 23.9.09/ *IntN4b*-
23.9.09/
Mobility- *IntN1* 30.10.07/
IntN1a 30.10.07

STAFF CONTEXT:

Length of time at school- *IntN1a*
30.10.07/ *IntN2b*- 24.6.08/
IntN2c- 24.6.08/ *IntN3*- 3.7.08/
IntN4a- 23.9.09/ *IntN4b*-
23.9.09/ *IntN4c*- 23.9.09/
IntN4d- 23.9.09/
Previous experiences/ reasons
for coming to school- *IntN1a*
30.10.07/ *IntN2b*- 24.6.08/
IntN2c- 24.6.08/ *IntN3*- 3.7.08/
IntN4a- 23.9.09/ *IntN4b*-
23.9.09/ *IntN4c*- 23.9.09/

DATA RELATING TO THE ACTIONS AND PROCESSES OF DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE PRACTICES:

LEARNING/ CURRICULUM FACTORS:

Learning Environment- FN1
 17.9.07/ FN2 30.10.07/ FN3-
 6.12.07/ FN6 24.6.08/ IntN1a
 30.10.07/ IntN2a- 24.6.08
Creative curriculum- IntN1a
 30.10.07/ IntN2a- 24.6.08/
 IntN4d- 23.9.08
Standards- IntN1 30.10.07/
 IntN4a- 23.9.08/ IntN4c-
 23.9.08
School Priorities- IntN2a-
 24.6.08/ IntN4c- 23.9.09/
 IntN4d- 23.9.09/
Innovative Initiatives-
 FN4- 13.5.08
OFSTED- IntN2a- 24.6.08/

PUPIL FACTORS:

Meeting needs- IntN1a
 30.10.07
Grouping children- FN1
 17.9.07/ FN7- 3.7.08/
 IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2b-
 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/
 IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a-
 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/
 IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4d-
 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/
Support for Children-
 IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN4a-
 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/
 IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4d-
 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/
Class size- IntN2b-
 24.6.08

STAFF FACTORS:

Communication- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a
 30.10.07
Leadership- FN2 30.10.07/ IntN1
 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07/ IntN2a-
 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/
 IntN4e- 23.9.09/
Change- IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4b-
 23.9.09/
Staff meeting- power relationships-
 FN5 23.6.08

**DATA RELATING TO THE EMOTIONS AND FEELINGS
ASSOCIATED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF DEVELOPING
INCLUSIVE PRACTICES:**

PRACTITIONER PHILOSOPHIES:

Barriers to Inclusion-

*FN1 17.9.07/ FN2 30.10.07/ FN4- 13.5.08/ FN7
3.7.08*

*IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2b- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/
IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/
IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/*

Constant drain/ resources- *IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a
30.10.07*

3.7.08/ FN7 3.7.08

Views on Inclusion-

*FN4- 13.5.08/ FN6 24.6.08/ IntN2a- 24.6.08/
IntN2b- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/
IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/ IntN4c- 23.9.09/
IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/ IntN2a- 24.6.08/
IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09*

Notion of 'successful schools'-

FN2 30.10.07/ IntN1 30.10.07

SEN- Inclusion- *IntN1a 30.10.07*

Exclusion- *IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN4e- 23.9.08*

PRACTITIONER LEARNING:

Professional and reflective dialogue- *FN4:
13.5.08*

Steep Learning Curve- *IntN1 30.10.07*

Difficult- *IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07*

Challenge- *IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07*

Reflective Practitioner- *IntN2b- 24.6.08/
IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a-*

*23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/
IntN4e- 23.9.09*

STAFF FOCUS:

Team approach-

FN2 30.10.07/ FN6 24.6.08/ IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07/ IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/

Staff turnover- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07

Impact on staff- IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09

Responsibility- IntN1 30.10.07

Vision statement- IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07

Ethos- IntN1a 30.10.07

Ways to talk about the children- IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2b- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN3- 3.7.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4b- 23.9.09/ IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09

Future/ progress- IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN4b- 23.9.08

PUPIL FACTORS:

Challenging children-

FN1 17.9.07

Behaviour- FN6:

24.6.08/ IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07

Social and emotional needs- IntN1

30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07

STAFF EMOTIONS:

Satisfaction- IntN1 30.10.07

Feelings and language used-

IntN1 30.10.07/ IntN1a 30.10.07/ IntN2a- 24.6.08/ IntN2b- 24.6.08/ IntN2c- 24.6.08/ IntN4a- 23.9.09/ IntN4c- 23.9.09/ IntN4d- 23.9.09/ IntN4e- 23.9.09/

Rewarding- IntN1 30.10.07

Not coping- IntN1a 30.10.07

Stressful- IntN1a 30.10.07

Conflict- IntN1a 30.10.07

Exhausting- IntN1a 30.10.07

Staff who care- IntN1a

Appendix 13:

Education Faculty Research Ethics Review

Application for full review

MAIN RESEARCHER	Alison Ekins
E-MAIL	Aje16@cant.ac.uk
POSITION WITHIN CCCU	Associate Tutor: Centre for Enabling Learning
POSITION OUTSIDE CCCU	AST SENCO/ Inclusion and Access Advisor/ Learning and Inclusion Co-ordinator
COURSE (students only)	Ed D.
DEPARTMENT	
PROJECT TITLE	
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: NAME	Guy Roberts-Holmes
TUTOR/SUPERVISOR: E-MAIL	Gpr1@cant.ac.uk
DURATION OF PROJECT	Two years

OTHER RESEARCHERS:

Names	Contact details	Position in CCCUC	Position outside CCCUC

Note that participatory research involving a possibly as yet unspecified group of ‘co-researchers’ may treat these as participants for the purpose of completing this form.

GIVE DETAILS OF ANY ACTUAL, PERCEIVED OR POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR ANY OF THE RESEARCHERS INVOLVED. (Include also details of how this is to be addressed.)

As an AST SENCO and Inclusion and Access Advisor within Kent, I am already working with schools in an advisory and supportive capacity. I will therefore be taking stringent steps to ensure that the schools that I approach and work with through the research project are NOT those with whom I have worked as an AST SENCO or an Inclusion and Access Advisor. I shall also ensure that there is a clear understanding, through a written and signed contract, of the focus and nature of my work within the school- and that it will not be in an advisory role.

GIVE DETAILS OF THE FUNDING BODY, OF THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING AND OF ANY RELEVANT CONDITIONS IMPOSED.

Is this project aimed mainly at achieving an academic qualification?	YES
Is this project mainly aimed at improving the practice/performance of people or organizations involved in the research?	No
Will the project results be published in academic journals?	Yes
Will the project results be published in professional journals?	Yes
Will the project results be published in other ways?	Yes

GIVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE “SCIENTIFIC”, PRACTICAL OR POLITICAL BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

This research project will provide a critical study of the discourse surrounding the issue of inclusion within literature, policy and practice, identifying and analysing the inherent

contradictions within contemporary discussions. It will also focus upon developing existing understandings of the nature and development of inclusion through an analysis of different organisational and cultural factors which have influenced the journey towards inclusion within three case study schools.

Give details of literature searches conducted.	Ainscow, Booth & Dyson (2006); Dyson EPPI Review (2002); MacBeath (2006); Peters, S (2003 & 2004)
Has a similar study been carried out previously?	Ainscow, Booth & Dyson (2006) Improving Schools, Developing Inclusion.
If so, why is it worth repeating the study.	This project will not replicate the Ainscow, Booth & Dyson study, although there are some similarities in terms of focus of interest. Whilst the Ainscow, Booth & Dyson study looked at a relatively large sample of schools across three different LEA's, this study will focus attention upon three case study schools in order to add complexity and depth to some of the issues. In particular, the focus of attention within this study shall be upon the individual organisational and cultural factors affecting the development of Inclusive practices and understandings within three different school contexts, rather than upon an examination and analysis of specific inclusive practices and teaching approaches across a wide range of schools The research methodology will differ: a critical ethnographic approach will be used within this project, compared to the collaborative action research approach of the Ainscow, Booth & Dyson study. This project will therefore build upon and add complexity and depth to current understandings of Inclusion and the development of inclusive thinking within the school context.
WHO HAS PEER-REVIEWED THIS STUDY? (Attach any relevant comments.)	Ed D Management Committee (Mike Radford/ Sonia Blanford etc) Supervising Tutor: Guy Robert-Holmes

GIVE A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE PROJECT. Include, for example, sample selection, recruitment procedures, data collection, data analysis.

Possible schools will be identified through introduction from informed colleagues- including my AST Line Manager, my MA Lecturing colleague, my headteacher and my Ed D Personal Supervisor. All of these people have in depth knowledge about a range of schools, and will be able to act as the gate-keeper to establish initial contact and access to possible research sites. It will be emphasised that I shall not be working with any schools with whole I already have contact through my AST or Advisory work. Instead, possible schools shall be identified through their own interest and wish to engage in research into the issue of Inclusion. Once initial introductions have been made and access gained, I shall spend some time explaining the research project to members of the Senior Leadership Team in each school. I shall ensure that informed consent is gained from each member of staff within the school context. A simple written contract shall be drawn up which shall be signed by staff members

to ensure that they have understood fully the purpose of the research and their part within it. In particular attention shall be focused upon ensuring that staff members are reassured of the confidentiality of the research. This shall be in terms of ensuring that honest responses by staff members are anonymised so that members of the Senior Leadership can not recognise them, and also so that general comments and data gathered about the school as a whole will not be able to be identified on completion of the research.

A mixed research methodology will be utilised, making use of observations and interviews as well questionnaires and analysis of school based documentation relevant to the issue of Inclusion. Staff members will be made fully aware of when and how data will be gathered, and it will be explained that they will have the right to withdraw from the research on not undertake a particular activity at any time.

During interviews, permission will be gained to use a tape recorder, and participants will receive a copy of the interview notes and transcripts taken. They will then have the opportunity to make changes and agree the notes before they are used within the final write up of the research. Once transcripts have been taken of the interview data the tapes shall be destroyed in line with Data Protection regulations.

As the research period will be over a period of two years, it will be essential to ensure that an honest relationship is developed, built upon trust between myself as researcher and the school as a whole, and all the individual school members. Throughout the research process, I shall therefore ensure that key findings or discussions are fed back to the school and members of staff, and that they are happy with the direction of the research. As the research develops the school will also be able to have some input into the direction that the research will take. Thus it may be that the school will want to engage in more reflective discussions as the process develops and that they would like my role to develop as a critical friend.

WHAT IS EXPECTED TO BE LEARNT AS A RESULT OF THIS STUDY

1. The research project will add to understandings of the nature of Inclusion within the educational setting.
2. The particular organisational and cultural factors affecting the development of inclusive practices and understandings will be identified.

Exactly what will happen to participants, their products or records about them that goes beyond usual practice.	Participants may be asked to participate within interviews, but their full informed consent shall be gained, and they will have a full and clear understanding of the purpose of each research activity. Tape recordings will be destroyed following transcription and all data gathered will be agreed by the participants before inclusion in the project.
Potential risks for participants	Participants will not be asked to engage in any research activity which will put them at any risk. All views or opinions shared through interviews will be anonymised and will remain confidential.
Potential benefits for participants	The research project will enable participants to have the opportunity to reflect more deeply and critically about their own inclusive practice, understandings and beliefs.
How will participants be made aware of the results of the study?	Drafts of any interpretations will be shared with participants and agreed with them before final writing up of the project.

	Participants will also receive a summary of the main findings and will have the choice to have a full copy of the research project.
How will participants be selected?	Schools will be selected through invitation to engage in the research project. Selection of participants from within the school setting will also be achieved through invitation, and informed consent will be gained from all staff members contributing to the research.
How many participants will be recruited?	Three case study schools will be used. The number of participants will depend upon the number of staff members within each school setting.
Explain, as precisely as possible, why this number of participants is necessary and sufficient? Where details of a statistical calculation are not appropriate, an equivalent level of detail should be provided.	Three schools will provide variety in organisational and cultural factors affecting their particular journey towards inclusive practice, and will therefore add depth and complexity to the research.
How will participants be approached and by whom?	Schools will be approached initially by colleagues working with me who know the school well. Once schools have agreed to me contacting them, I shall approach the headteacher and Senior Leadership Team directly to explore fully the nature of the research. Individual staff members within the school will be invited to engage in the research, but will not be expected to have to engage.
Will participants be recruited individually or en bloc?	Schools as a complete institution will be recruited, but then individual permission will be gained to undertake any particular research eg interview/ questionnaire, with individual members of staff.
Are participants likely to feel under pressure to consent / assent to participation?	There will not be any pressure put upon participants to consent/ assent to participation.
Will participants include minors, people with learning difficulties or other vulnerable people?	No
How will voluntary informed consent be obtained from individual participants or those with a right to consent for them?	The research process shall be explained in full to each individual wanting to participate, and a written contract shall be drawn up which shall be signed to ensure that full informed consent is gained before participants engage in the research process. It will be emphasised to all participants that they have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage.
How will assent be obtained from competent minors and other vulnerable people?	N/A

How will permission be sought from those responsible for institutions / organisations hosting the study?	Initial permission and contact will always be established with the headteachers of each participating school, before approaching any other members of staff within the institution.
How will the privacy and confidentiality of participants be safeguarded?	All data gathered, including questionnaires and interview transcripts shall be anonymised and kept confidential.
What steps will be taken to comply with the Data Protection Act?	All interview tapes shall be destroyed after transcription in line with Data Protection guidelines. All interview transcripts and completed questionnaires will be kept in a locked room, and headteachers will not be able to see individual responses from their staff. Instead they will see anonymised overviews.
What steps will be taken to allow participants to retain control over audio-visual records of them and over their creative products and items of a personal nature.	Interviewees will be sent copies of interview transcripts for them to agree before they are included within the research project.
Give the qualifications and/or experience of the researcher and/or supervisor in this form of research.	MA in Enabling Learning- Christ Church University College, 2002 Currently completing Ed D Supervisor: Dr Guy Roberts-Holmes

Attach any:

Participant information sheets and letters
Consent forms
Data collection instruments

DECLARATION

- The information in this form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to conduct this research in accordance with University's Research Governance procedures.
- If the research is approved, I undertake to adhere to the study protocol without deviation and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter sent by the FREC notifying me of this.
- I undertake to inform the FREC of any changes in the protocol and to seek their agreement and to submit annual progress reports. I am aware of my responsibility to be up to date and comply with the requirements of the law and appropriate guidelines relating to security and confidentiality of participant or other personal data, including the need to register when appropriate with the appropriate Data Protection Officer.
- I understand that research records/data may be subject to inspection for audit purposes if required in future and that research records should be kept securely for five years.

- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this application will be held by the FREC and that this will be managed according to the principles established in the Data Protection Act.

Signature of Researcher:

Print Name:

Date:

FOR STUDENT APPLICATION ONLY

I have read the research proposal and application form, and support this submission to the FREC.

Signature of the Supervisor:

Print Name:

Date:

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE COURSE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

--

Endorsements

	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Approved by Course Committee			
Checked by Faculty Committee			

CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO APPROVAL BY THE EDUCATION FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

--

Endorsements

	NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Approved by Faculty Committee			

Appendix 14

School N Staff Meeting Data

“Inclusion” Questionnaire Responses.

School N:

What does the term Inclusion mean to you?

Write a sentence to try to encompass your understanding of this term:

1. To allow all children the opportunity to be in mainstream education.
2. Everyone being offered the same opportunities. However if behavior (bad) has potential to affect the work/ well being of others then maybe certain individuals have lost their opportunity to be included.
3. Enabling, supporting every child to achieve their full potential, whatever that may be.
4. Every child receiving the education appropriate to their needs as a right.
5. Including ALL children in learning and daily school life- all children are entitled to access the curriculum as well as life skills and teachers should work in a way to ensure this happens.
6. Inclusion is giving everyone the opportunity to learn at a level appropriate to the individual.
7. It ‘means’ letting any ‘old Tom, Dick or Harry’, regardless of ability or behavior, remain in mainstream schooling, regardless of the damage they do to the environment and people around them or the learning achieved by their peers.
8. Getting everyone involved in whatever you are trying to achieve.
9. That most children can be included and integrated into the mainstream education system.
10. To give all children the opportunity of being included in class and access to the National Curriculum.

Now, spend some time reflecting upon your definition.

What do you think has influenced or impacted upon your thinking to lead you to this definition?

Is it:

- ☐ **Media?**
- ☐ **Your own experiences of school as a child?**
- ☐ **Your own experiences of school as a teacher?**
- ☐ **Government Policy?**
- ☐ **Colleagues?**
- ☐ **Training?**
- ☐ **Other- please specify:.....**

Please tick as many of the above that are applicable, and then briefly describe how these have impacted upon your thinking in this area:

1. (Teacher/ Colleagues/ Media/ Gov Policy)
Government policy- closure of special schools and behavior units to promote inclusion as there are few alternatives.
As a teacher the wish to enable children to partake in all the experiences school life has to offer- great effort on part of leadership team to try and manage this.
2. (Teacher/ Training/ Media)

Training and media HAVE to sell inclusion. Some children make this impossible as they ruin the leaning environment. In this case, they have been given the same chances, but can't be included as 'normal'.

3. (Child/ Teacher/ Colleagues)
Teachers who helped me achieve in lessons (particularly PE which I was hopeless at)
Trying to help children achieve whatever small steps they can, despite whatever barriers they may have to their learning (learning, social, behavior, emotional)
Watching/ guidance from colleagues
4. (Child/ Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training?)
As a child I was aware I was one of the lucky ones. I was a round shape in a round hole. I could show achievement in the conventional sense. Not all my friends/ family were so lucky.
Teaching children in a mainstream school where with the best will in the world these children could not succeed because even though we knew their needs we as a school could not provide for them. I have had the privilege to work with inspirational colleagues. Training has also helped me identify the needs of the children but sadly have not had the resources to provide them.
5. (Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training)
Training at university focused more on the learning side of inclusion- learning styles (VAK etc). As a teacher, I feel that the more experience I gain, the more I learn how to ensure that all children are included- not just in learning but things such as seating arrangements, groupings, responsibility, differentiation etc
6. (Child/ Teacher/ Training/ Media/ Other- sister)
Teacher- I always try to include every child but am careful that this does not have a negative impact on the learning of the class as a whole due to challenging behavior etc
Other- lack of help given to my sister who had severe learning needs at secondary school when inclusion was not seen as such an important issue.
7. (Child/ Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training/ Media/ Government Policy)
The environment has changed since I was a child and a teacher, even in the last 4 years. I am surprised by the lack of support for staff, schools and pupils who remain included. Training was all fluffy and totally unrelated to the real world, and since it was based on Government Policy... well, enough said. The media only serves to highlight the failings of the system for the individuals and the 'forgotten' masses of young, happy, helpful and 'eager to learn', well behaved children.
8. (Child/ Teacher/ Colleagues)
I was always brought up and encouraged to take part in as many different activities as were available. As a family we always did things where possible and as a teacher I try to do the same. We were brought up to think of others and to do our best to include people however different.
9. (Teacher/ Gov Policy)
Government policy changed late 80's/ early 90's to get rid of special schools. Children with EBD issues were put into mainstream schools, where they were unable to succeed. I have taught many children with EBD issues and they can't cope, because their needs are hard to meet without sufficient funding/ human resources.
10. (Teacher/ Training/ Media/ Gov Policy)
However from my experience as a teacher I would question the use of inclusion in some extreme instances due to the impact on the class. I have experiences both positive and negative affects.

School N: Inclusion Staff Meeting- Oct.08

Our Vision for Inclusion at this School:

- Everyone has the same opportunities
- Having a nurture class
- Supporting specific needs
- Every child makes progress
- All children have access to the whole curriculum
- Teaching staff play a major role
- Sunshine Room

At N, all members of our working community are committed to providing a learning environment appropriate to all children's academic, emotional and social needs.

School N Inclusion Staff Meeting: Oct.08

Factors that Support:

Discussion: staff discussed the comments, and decided upon how to group the responses- talked freely with each other about the clear dominance of feelings about the supportive atmosphere within the school context.

Children who arrive fit,
mentally and physically

Skilled differentiation

Supportive management
nurture room in morning

Colleagues who are always
Supportive- listen and advise

Systems we have in place
Staff
Facilities

Support network in school

Supportive colleagues

Positive attitudes in the
working environment

All staff working together
- Single focus

Support and encouragement

School N. Inclusion Staff Meeting: Oct.08

Factors that Hinder:

Discussion: a range of issues were identified and discussed. They were loosely grouped as below:

Access to provision From outside agencies	Behaviour of children Support of parents (maybe Finance- eg school trip Money	Children who refuse to accept any form of help/ support/ inclusion offered
Lack of money	Parents Social/ home environment	No nurture room in the afternoon when children find it harder to cope
Problems with basic Resources TV- not always working Very few pencils Whiteboards pens	School phobic/ illiterate parents, who find it very hard to support their children	Bad behaviour
Lack of TA support In classroom	Parents	

Appendix 15:
School S Staff Meeting Data
“Inclusion” Questionnaire Responses.
School S:

What does the term Inclusion mean to you?

Write a sentence to try to encompass your understanding of this term:

1. To include every child into the education process. For each child to feel fully included and valued. This may not mean that every child should access all, or mainstream school, but be included in appropriate provision.
2. Being taught in mainstream school instead of in a special school. Having curriculum differentiated to meet needs. Expecting needs to be met by some teachers who may not have encountered the type of difficulties they have, or had training.
3. Pupils of all abilities/ backgrounds/ behaviours/ language being taught within the classroom at their own level, work being differentiated accordingly, rather than removed to be taught in smaller units.
4. All children should be included in high quality education at their appropriate level, taking account of any specific educational need that they may have.
5. That every child has the right to the same education. Those with SEN have the right to be supported during mainstream education to receive this education.
6. Including everyone/ knowing when it's fine not to include someone/ NOT inclusion for inclusions sake!
7. Having children in mainstream schools regardless of individual need- is this the best place for them? Are their needs best met by being in a class where the adults have little time to spend with children that have a specific need and may find the environment difficult to deal with.
8. Every child/ person in a classroom together regardless of ability/ situation. Every child's needs catered for in one environment.
9. Allowing people the chance to have access to something regardless of any difficulties they may have.
10. Everyone is included.
11. Inclusion is ensuring all children have access to the curriculum, overcoming any barriers. Ensuring children feel equal, safe and treated as an individual.
12. That all children are entitled to be educated in a state school rather than attend a special school
13. Allowing all children the right to participate in all activities if they choose, regardless of ethnicity, gender, disability, religion or cognitive ability, without detriment to others or self
14. An holistic approach whereby the needs of the education system are fairly meted out through an awareness of social, psychological, physical, cultural et al needs.
15. All children should have the opportunity to be able to take part in all activities etc in school, ways and means for this need to be provided.
16. Inclusion means to me to include all of the children all of the time. I believe each child's needs should be met whenever possible. Differentiation is vital if we are to include all of the children within the curriculum.
17. Inclusion to me means providing and allowing everyone access to the curriculum. Differentiation of lessons in order to allow children to do this. Making a safe secure environment for children so that whatever their needs they can access the curriculum.

Now, spend some time reflecting upon your definition.

What do you think has influenced or impacted upon your thinking to lead you to this definition?

Is it:

- **Media?**
- **Your own experiences of school as a child?**
- **Your own experiences of school as a teacher?**
- **Government Policy?**
- **Colleagues?**
- **Training?**
- **Other- please specify:.....**

Please tick as many of the above that are applicable, and then briefly describe how these have impacted upon your thinking in this area:

1. (Ch/ Teacher/ Colleagues)
Everything you encounter as an individual will impact on your thoughts and opinions. The people who are closest to you and your own experiences are the most powerful. This is where we must be aware of the influence on children's thoughts and opinions that we have.
2. (Teacher/ Teacher Training/ Media/ Gov Policy/ Learning about history of education and why special schools began- Warnock Report)
I feel the gov didn't really consider the implications inclusion would mean- the need to be trained, the extra money in school- statements have dwindled, harder to get children this.
3. (Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training/ Gov Policy)
Have been encouraged to plan for even greater ranges of ability etc within the classroom than before.
4. (Ch/ Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training/ Media/ Gov Policy)
My own schooling was very difficult and I felt an outcast because I found reading difficult. I remember being taken out of lessons and given extra help that made me feel hopelessly dim. This has been the biggest impact when considering inclusion.
5. (Ch- speech therapy for stuttering/ Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training/ As a parent of a child with SEN)
As a parent, I feel that a child needs to be supported in mainstream and their needs are met. As a teacher, I need to know what a child's needs are to support them to make sure they are getting the best education. The gov should be placing financial support in schools to make sure school are able to give the proper support.
6. (Teacher)
Actually experiencing trying to include everyone just because you have to despite it having no positive impact on a child has impacted on my understanding.
7. (Teacher)
Trying desperately to deal with certain individuals within a whole class context. Is it fair on the other children in the class? Is it fair on the children with a specific need?
8. (Teacher/ Training)
Experiences of teaching pupils with a range of needs and finding the best possible way to deal with them/ teach them in a class of others. Trying to include those when it seems very hard!
9. (Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training/ Gov Policy)

As a teacher I have taught children with behavior problems, autism, EAL etc and have had to find ways of ensuring they can access the curriculum. I have had to seek help from colleagues and have attended courses in order to help me do this.

10. (Child/ Teacher)
Working with very SEN children- where they have flourished through effective support in school. Doesn't have to be through assessment or progress but improvements in social learning.
11. (Teacher/ Training)
Throughout my time in teaching I have understood the importance of seeing children with different needs reaching their full potential with a free mind. Many children will not voice their thoughts and it is major for teachers to recognize and make it known that the child is heard and valued.
12. (Teacher/ Colleagues/ Training/ Gov Policy)
Children who are obviously not suited, and cannot cope with the state system should be able to transfer to an appropriate school quickly and not have to suffer waiting for the wheels of bureaucracy.
13. (Ch/ CT/ Colleagues/ Training)
At school with a thalidomide child (peer) despite wanting to join in she was often left out by other children. Seeing the wealth of experiences/ ideas/ thoughts/ joy etc each child can bring to the class/ group/ team/ school.
14. (Ch/ CT/ Colleagues/ Training)
As a child my parents encouraged us to befriend children from diverse backgrounds. School settings have impacted because of 'catchment' area and local issues. Excellent modeling from previous headteachers/ teachers.
15. (CT/ Training)
Working with children I have seen how important it is for all children to be given the opportunity to take part. I feel that it is my job to enable this to happen, to encourage children and provide ways for all to join in and take part in our everyday happenings.
16. (Ch/ CT/ Colleagues/ Training)
As a child I remember children in my class having special needs but they were not given any support to help them. As a teacher I have come across many different needs and have tried to support them.
17. (CT/ Colleagues/ Training/ Gov Policy)
Government policy has meant that with less 'special' schools and more children with additional needs being included in mainstream schools we have to as teachers be aware of the needs of all children and adapt our teaching accordingly.

School S: Inclusion Staff Meeting- 23.9.08

Our Vision for Inclusion at this School:

- Full access to the curriculum
- Differentiation
- Everyone
- Training
- Holistic
- Feeling valued
- Overcoming barriers
- Support
- Safe and secure
- Funding

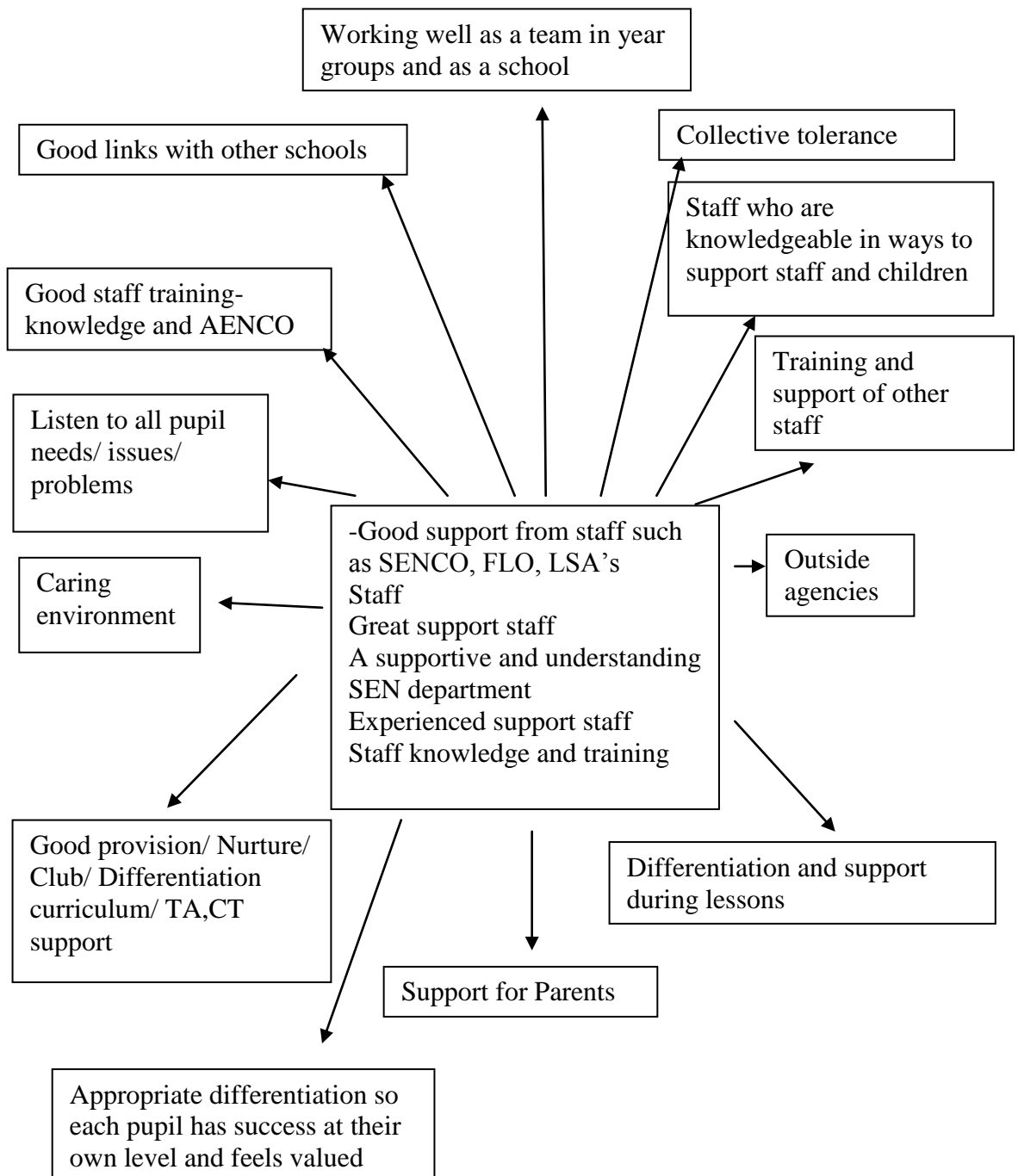
At S we adopt a holistic approach to enable appropriate access for all.

Via a safe and secure environment we strive to ensure everyone feels valued. Training is given to support both staff and pupils in order to overcome barriers to learning.

School S. Inclusion Staff Meeting: 29.9.08

Factors that Support:

Discussion: staff discussed the importance of the team approach and supportive systems that have been set up. The staff chatted freely and jokingly about this- about the support that they received from each other, and how that made getting through 'the traumas' bearable.



School S. Inclusion Staff Meeting: 29.9.08

Factors that Hinder:

Discussion: staff agreed that the bad behavior was the visible symptom of the other issues. Other issues caused the bad behavior in the first place. Lengthy discussion about the impact of the bad behavior of the few on the majority of children who worked and tried hard all the time- staff commented that this was actually exclusionary towards the other children.

